Indigenous Remnants In the Spotlight at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

Stuart McIntosh and Therese Turner (Horticulturists), Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

Melbourne's world-renowned Royal Botanic Gardens are about to undergo their most significant enhancement since William Guilfoyle designed their acclaimed sweeping lawns and winding paths in the late 1800s.

The major new development of the Old Melbourne Observatory site, which has been managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens since 1992, will increase the total size of the land under Gardens management by 10 hectares, and provide new world-class visitor facilities and plant displays to complement the historic Gardens.

Built in 1863 and situated between the Kings Domain, Government House and the Shrine of Remembrance, the Old Observatory is very much one of Melbourne's 'forgotten corners' because with the exception of occasional telescope viewings, it has seldom been open to the general public.

The project involves the restoration of Observatory buildings dating back to 1861, the construction of a new visitor complex, and soft landscape development which includes an Indigenous Grassy Woodland, scheduled for completion late in 1998.

A number of elements of native vegetation also survive on the site. Almost all of the canopy species from the original vegetation on the site have been lost, with five old trees of Bursaria spinosa being the principal possible survivors. One of these trees is located north-west of the Caretakers Cottage, with the others south and south-west of the Magnet House. Other possible canopy remnants include a single specimen of Eucalyptus melliodora (west of the gate to the Astronomer's Residence) and several of Acacia implexa (along the Government House fence line). Both the Bursaria and the Eucalyptus are listed on the National Trust Register of Significant Trees. The Bursarias are likely to be either remnant specimens, or progeny of remnants now gone.
In view of this, after spraying for Growing Australian Plants, we will be using Jute-mat, a biodegradable product that will suppress weed growth for up to two years.

We are excited that these remnant plants have rightly been given a priority in this new high profile Observatory Gate project and that Melbourne’s indigenous plants will be given another opportunity to thrive in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for their generous assistance in compiling this article: Neville Walsh, Wendy Williams, Richard Barley and Jo Mayall from the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

We would also like to thank George Stolfo from the Society for Growing Australian Plants, Maroondah Group for kindly allowing us the use of his illustrations in this article.


Map of the site at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.
Copied from the RBG Melbourne Master Plan, drawn by Andrew Laidlaw.

View This Item Online: https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/289738
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5962/p.374069
Permalink: https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/374069

Holding Institution
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

Sponsored by
Atlas of Living Australia

Copyright & Reuse
Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.
Rights Holder: Australian Network for Plant Conservation
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Rights: http://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions

This document was created from content at the Biodiversity Heritage Library, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org.

This file was generated 23 November 2023 at 09:03 UTC