Welcome to
Celebrate Our Wattle

Australia's golden emblem comes of age
An exhibition to celebrate the 21st birthday of
the Golden Wattle as Australia's floral emblem

The Friends in association with the Gardens
present:
A look at people's everyday use
and the official use
of wattle.
Indigenous Use

Wattles (Acacias) are the most widespread of all Australian plant species;

The indigenous people of Australia have used wattles for thousands of years;

Wattles were used as food;
   as medicine;
   for shelter and as fuel
   for the making of tools and implements.
DID YOU KNOW? Indigenous Use

Wattle Seed: • green pods were heated over a fire until they popped and the seeds were eaten like peas;
• dried seeds were ground to flour then mixed with liquid to make damper which was cooked in the coals of the fire;
• high in protein.

Wattle Gum: • in central Australia, indigenous people collected the sweet gum of mulga (Acacia aneura);
• when soaked in water the gum dissolves, turns to jelly for eating - a sweet treat;
• during autumn, Victoria western desert people cut notches in late black wattle (Acacia mearnsii) to collect the gum;
• in coastal areas, gum was collected from the silver wattle (Acacia dealbata) and the golden wattle (Acacia pycnantha);
• gum was also used as a treatment for diarrhoea;
• mixed with wattle ash, gum was used to treat wounds and sores.

Timber: • used to make tools and implements such as boomerangs.

Bark: • some species used as a fish poison.

Roots: • Witchetty bush (Acacia kempeana) often have witchety grubs living in them;
• Mulga (Acacia aneura) often have honey ants in the vicinity of the roots;
• The stringy parts of roots and twigs were spun into threads to make nets, girdles and dilly-bags.
Early Settlers Use

The early settlers in the colonies used various wattles, Acacia species, for many purposes.

Wattles were used as fuel; as medicines; for tanning leather; for wattle and daub building; as a stiffening agent for fine cloth; as an emergency stock fodder in times of drought.
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| **Wattle**       | - The vernacular name wattle is derived from an Anglo-Saxon building technique;  
|                  | - 'Wattles' were flexible twigs or small branches interwoven to form the framework of buildings;  
|                  | - This frame was then daubed with mud, giving the wattle and daub building method;  
|                  | - This style of building was introduced to Australia by early British settlers and species of Acacia were used as 'wattles'.  
| **Medicine**     | - Golden wattle (Acacia pycnantha) was used for treating dysentery and diarrhoea;  
|                  | - An extract of bark was prepared as either an infusion or a decoction;  
|                  | - Also used for minor ailments, such as perspiring feet.  
| **Stiffening Agent** | - Gum Acacia or Gum Arabic was used in solution in the laundry for stiffening fine fabrics, silks and laces;  
|                  | - Especially good for dark materials that would be marked by white starch.  
| **Tanning Industry** | - A growth industry in the 1800's, when leather was essential for colonial Australia; to make everyday items such as saddles, reins, straps, belts, shoes, laces, rifle slings as well as pump and suction washers;  
|                  | - Golden wattle' (A. pycnantha) which yielded up to 45.8% tannins was the most popular species used;  
|                  | - bark was usually harvested in the wild although many wattles were planted along the railway lines out of Melbourne for future harvesting.  

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[Image]
Governor Philip began a new settlement at Parramatta and before the end of 1790 there were thirty-two houses completed, built of wattles, plastered with clay and thatched. The image above shows a wattle and daub house similar to the ones constructed at Parramatta. The first church built in Sydney by the Reverend Richard Johnson was a wattle and daub structure with a thatched roof.

Modern Culinary Use

Wattle (Acacia) is a legume but many are NOT safe to eat.

Approximately 50 out of 954 Australian wattle species are edible. So don’t eat wattle seed unless you are CERTAIN of the identification,
- you could be very sick!

_Acacia victoriae_ (common name gundabluey) is the most important wattle used in the Australian bush food industry.
DID YOU KNOW?  

Modern Culinary Use

Wattle Seed:  
- has a rich coffee-hazelnut flavour;  
- can be roasted, ground and brewed like coffee;  
- is used in biscuits, bread, pasta, creams, pavlovas, ice creams, jellies, pancakes, blinis, sauces, sauces, chutneys, cakes, mousse and tea.

Gum Acacia:  
- is a water soluble polysaccharide also known as Gum Arabic;  
- this is produced from plantations of Acacia senegal in north-east Africa;  
- Australia imports over $1.5 million worth of Gum Arabic per year;  
- it is used as a food thickener in desserts, ice cream, sauces and even jelly beans;  
- it prevents ice crystals forming in frozen foods;  
- food additive number is 414 – look for it on labels;  
- this gum is also used on the back of stamps.

Bush Foods  
- In the 1980’s some of the early champions of Australian native foods were Vic Cherikoff of Bush Tucker Supply, Jean-Paul Bruneteau of Rowantree and Riberies, and Andrew Fielke of Red Ochre;  
- In Canberra, Ironbark Cafe serves Australian native bush foods.
Artistic and Everyday Use

Colonial settlers recognised the aesthetic quality of wattles and used images of wattle for a range of decorative purposes.

Wattle has since featured on a variety of domestic objects, on ornaments, as jewellery, in marquetry, paintings and even on clothing.

Images of wattle have been an important design element in the development of patriotic gifts and tourist mementos.
DID YOU KNOW?  

Artistic and Everyday Colour

Colour  
- Pantone, the global authority on colour, has declared that ‘Mimosa’ (14-0848 TCX) is the 2009 Colour of the Year;
- It embodies Hopefulness and Reassurance in a climate of change.

Textiles  
- Over twenty different species of wattle can be used for dyeing fibres and fabrics;
- Fibre can be extracted from all parts of the tree, from the blossom to the bark;
- Combined with different mineral mordants, a range of colours from fawns, lemon yellows, golds, browns and greys can be produced.

Timber  
- Blackwood (Acacia melanoxylon) is a tough timber with an attractive grain, highly prized for furniture and cabinet making;
- Mulga (Acacia aneura), with its contrasting two-toned wood, is often used for highly polished souvenir pieces.

Ceramics  
- Ceramics decorated with Australian motifs, such as wattle, were first produced in Britain in 1901, after Australia's federation. Wedgewood, Doulton and Worcester designed and made series of wares, mostly destined for the Australian market;
- Ceramics produced in Australia with wattle motifs included Anna Ware;
- Thancoupie, OA, whose totemic name means ‘wattle flower’, is a pre-eminent Aboriginal ceramicist, elder and teacher.
SYMBOLIC NATIONAL FLOWER

Wattle as a Fund Raiser

The Wattle League used wattle celebrations to popularise native plant growing and raising money for many charitable organisations.

The wattle sprig became a badge of National identity.

During World War I, money was raised for the war effort by selling wattle and wattle badges. Wattle badges were also sold during World War II.
Wattle as a Reminder of Home

My mother's letter came today and now my thoughts are far away, for in between its pages lay a little sprig of wattle.

During WW I mothers enclosed a sprig of wattle to sons abroad to remind them of home.

Cardboard boxes of wattle were sent to the wounded in hospitals in Egypt and later France and England.

Soldiers were permitted to wear sprigs of wattle on their uniform.

Wattle was distributed to military camps and hospitals.
A Little Sprig of Wattle
By Bombardier A.H. Scott 4th Battery A.F.A.
written in the trenches of Gallipoli.

My mother's letter came today,
And now my thoughts are far away,
For in between its pages lay
A little sprig of wattle.

"The old home now looks at its best,"
The message ran, "the country's dressed
In Spring's gay cloak, and I have pressed
A little sprig of Wattle."

I almost see that glimpse of spring:
The very air here seems to ring
With joyful notes of birds that sing
Among the sprigs of wattle.

The old home snug amidst the pines,
The trickling creek that twists and twines
Round tall gum roots and undermines,
Is all ablaze with wattle.

This, with above a clear blue sky,
Is pictured now in my minds eye:
A scene of peace on earth brought by
A little sprig of wattle.
SYMBOLIC NATIONAL FLOWER
Wattle as a Symbol of Remembrance

- After the massacre at Gallipoli, the Wattle League arranged for a planting of wattles near the graves of ANZAC's.

- In the 1920's, at Wattle Park, the Wattle League and the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria planted 12,000 wattles;

- But, in 1933, a Lone Pine from a Gallipoli seed was planted at Wattle Park and a clock erected in memory of a soldier killed at Pozieres. This signified Australian blood shed on the battlefields and linked wattle to war and death.

- In 1999, wattle was used as a public symbol of Australian loss, remembrance and mourning when the then Governor-General, Sir William Deane, and his wife took wattle sprigs to Switzerland for a ceremony that honoured the
lives of 14 young Australians lost in a canyoning accident.

- Then, in 2002, sprigs of wattle were placed on the chairs in the Great Hall of Parliament House where families and friends of the victims of the Bali bombings gathered to grieve. The Prime Minister, John Howard, and his wife wore sprigs of wattle.

In 2009, at the Westminster Abbey memorial service for Victoria’s 175 bushfire victims, Prince Charles and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd laid wreaths which included wattle.

- On 18 August 2009, at the Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony at the War Memorial in Canberra, all the official guests wore sprigs of wattle.
History of Wattle as a Floral Emblem

From the 1880's the Australian Natives Association, men born in the colonies, had campaigned to nominate wattle as the national flower. Because:

- wattle grew in all the colonies;
- wattle was of economic value to the tanning industry;
- wattle is bright in colour and beautiful.

By 1908 Australia already had an animal and bird on the Coat of Arms but no flower, as a floral emblem.

Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, used in the South Australian tanning industry, was suggested although other wattles were also acceptable, since wattles grew throughout Australia and were available to everyone.

‘Wattle symbolised an egalitarian, classless, free citizenry and was seen to be democratic’.  

(Libby Robin, *How a Continent Created a Nation*)

In 1912, the Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, recommended wattle to be added to the Australian Coat of Arms as a decoration.

Since then, the wattle has been used for numerous patriotic purposes and it features as the emblem of the Order of Australia in the Australian Honours System.

In 1984, the green and gold colours of the wattle were declared our national colours.

From the mid 1980s Maria Hitchcock of Armidale, and others, campaigned for the revival of Wattle Day. She even became known as the Wattle Lady on Ian Macnamara’s ‘Australia all Over’ ABC radio program broadcast across Australia on Sunday mornings, Maria had discovered that although wattle was on our Coat of Arms and generally accepted as our national flower, it had not been formally gazetted and proclaimed as such. This spurred her on to apply more pressure on the Government with petitions to rectify the situation.

Then, on 19 August 1988, the Governor General, Sir Ninian Steven, signed a proclamation that declared

‘the flowers of *Acacia pycnantha*, the plant known as the Golden Wattle, however depicted, shall be the national floral emblem of Australia.’

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of Australia (which incidently already had wattle on it!).

At last, on 1 September 1988, our bicentennial year, at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, the Commonwealth Government made the formal announcement when Senator the Hon. Robert Ray, Federal Minister for Home Affairs said

‘I officially declare the magnificent Golden Wattle to be the National floral emblem of Australia’

The Prime Minister’s wife, Mrs Hazel Hawke also spoke of our long held affection of wattle. Then, seven golden wattle trees were planted. First by Senator Ray, followed by Mrs Hawke, Mr Fred Daley, Mrs Maria Hitchcock, Dr Robert Boden (Director of ANBG) and two children from Hawker Primary School in their green and gold uniforms.

It was finally, formally and officially our floral emblem. Now, 21 years later, it has come of age—Let’s Celebrate our Wattle!
History of Wattle Day

1899 Archibald James Campbell established a Wattle Club, and later the Wattle League, which held ‘Wattle Day’ outings on the first of September.

1909 A public Meeting was held in Sydney to coordinate the first national Wattle Day;

1910 Wattle Day was celebrated in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne – the first organised demonstration on a particular day ever recorded in Australia;

1920 – 30 Wattle Day was celebrated in NSW, Qld, Vic, SA and Tasmania with special ceremonies and crowning of ‘wattle queens’.

Veronica Mason’s poem ‘The Wattle’, first printed in the Public Instruction Gazette in 1911, reprinted in the School Magazine of 1918 was then set to music as a song in 1929 and became very popular:

The Bush was grey
A week today
(Оlive green, and brown and grey)
But now the spring has come this way
with blossoms for the wattle

1930 – 60 Wattle Day influence faded away as environment and conservation groups emerged; such as the Society for Growing Australian Plants (established in 1957).

1987 – 8 Maria Hitchcock, with help of the ABC’s Ian Macnamara’s Australia all Over program, and many others lobbied successfully for Golden Wattle. *Acacia pycnantha* was formally declared Australia’s national floral emblem on 1 September 1988 at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

1992 On 23 June the Governor General Bill Hayden declared 1 September be observed as National Wattle Day

‘an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate our floral heritage, particularly through the planting of an *Acacia* species suitable for the area in which they live’.

Thus the first day of spring became Wattle Day, so avoiding the problem of different flowering times of wattle in each State.

1992 On 24 August it was gazetted and on the first of September Mrs Ros Kelly, Minister for the Environment, formally declared ‘National Wattle Day’ at a ceremony at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.
The Governor General, Sir Ninian Steven proclaimed green and gold the national colours on 19 April 1984.

- this follows nearly a century of popular use in the sporting arena;

- first used in 1896/8 for a touring cricket team;

- in 1908 by a touring rugby side;

at the Mexico Olympic Games in 1968 the Australian women’s swimsuit was a green nylon tricot featuring an all-over design of sprays of stylised wattle blooms:

Green (leaves) and gold (blossoms) are the colours of Australia’s floral emblem – the Golden Wattle;

- The colour references are:

  Green PANTONE ® 348C
  Gold PANTONE ® 116C
Golden Wattle

Family: Mimosaceae
Genus: Acacia - prickly, from Greek word akis a point. First named from prickly African acacias.
Species: pycnantha - Greek pyknos: dense, and anthos: flower
Author: George Bentham

Discovery:
Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of the colony of NSW, first collected golden wattle near Bendigo in 1836 while on an exploratory mission to the Darling and Murray systems. The dried specimens were sent back to England where George Bentham, the British Botanist, described them in 1842 as a new species Acacia pycnantha.

Description:
Golden wattle is a sturdy pendulous-leafed bushy shrub to small tree 4 to 8 metres tall with a spreading crown. The bark is generally smooth, dark brown to grey, often rough at base of trunk with branchlets almost round, reddish and often grey bloom coated. New growth is often bronze coloured. Its variable, broadly lance shaped phyllodes [a specialised flattened green leaf stalk which functions as a leaf] up to 20 cm long and up to 50 mm wide. The phyllodes have a prominent gland, or extra-floral nectary, at or near their base.

Distribution:
The widespread plant is sometimes common on dry stony ground or sand; from as far west as the Southern Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, across Victoria and into southern N.S.W.
It is naturalised in many places on the Tablelands of N.S.W. and on the east coast of Tasmania.
It has escaped from horticulture to become an environmental weed in Western Australia and is a declared noxious weed in South Africa.
OFFICIAL USE

Postage Stamps, Coins, and Medals

- The use of wattle, a symbol of Australia on our stamps, coins and medals, proclaims that these items represent Australia.

- The many species of wattle each with a multitude of blossoms remind us of the diversity of our peoples yet bonds us together as a nation.
DID YOU KNOW?

Postage Stamps

- The New South Wales 'six penny Queen Victoria crimson' issued from 26 November 1888 was the first postage stamp in Australia to have wattle in its design;

- The first Commonwealth of Australia postage stamp to include wattle was the King George V 'penny red' issued in December 1913. A similar design was used for many subsequent issues. This wattle was not *Acacia pycnantha* but probably *A. mearnsii* or *A. decurrens*

- Wattle was incorporated in the design of other Australian Stamps e.g. the 1937 King George VI 'threepenny blue' and 1938 '1/4 magenta';

- A 1959 stamp issue of Australian native flowers included a 2/3 green and yellow broad-leaved 'wattle' postage stamp; this was reprinted in green and white in 1964.

- The Royal visit of 1963 was commemorated in two stamps, the 5d stamp included wattle and oak leaves; the 2/3 stamp, rose and wattle.

- In 1966, with the start of decimal currency, the new postage stamps included the '5c Yellow-tailed thornbill' against a background of wattle;

- In 1968, there was an issue of postage stamps depicting the floral emblems of the six States but, because Australia did not have an official floral emblem, wattle missed out!

- Golden wattle was featured two years later as a coil 5c stamp on 17 April 1970, the first identifiable instance of our future floral emblem.

- On 5 January 1976, to mark the 75th anniversary of Nationhood, a stylised Australian Coat of Arms showing wattle, was depicted on an 18c stamp;

- To honour the Queen’s birthday in 1980, a 22c stamp showed Her Majesty wearing the Order of Australia. For the Queen’s birthday in 1985, a 33c stamp showed the Queen’s Badge, as Sovereign Head of the Order of Australia.

- Golden Wattle was on the 41c stamp designed by botanical artist, Celia Rosser, issued on 17 January to mark Australia Day 1990.
DID YOU KNOW?

- In 2001, the centenary year of Federation, the Royal Australian Mint in Canberra, minted a 50 cent coin realistically depicting the heraldic Australian Arms. This showed Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, the official floral emblem on our currency for the first time;

- Both the Canberra Mint and the Perth Mint produce coins which show a nominal face value but hold a considerably higher numismatic value that are sought by collectors worldwide;

- Wattle is depicted on an uncirculated silver 2 cent coin, designed by Andor Mésgáros in 1967;

- A bicentennial medal depicting wattle, was handed out to all Australian school children during 1988;

- To celebrate Australia's Centenary of Federation in 2001, a bi-metal gold and silver coin was released by Perth Mint. The coin combines the floral emblems and the Australian Coat of Arms, laid on a bed of golden wattle, our floral emblem;

Golden wattle was the subject of one of the coins released in the flora ‘Discover Australia’ series;

- An Australian Citizenship coin, portraying the Coat of Arms, is given to those taking the ‘pledge of commitment’ at an official conferring of Australian citizenship ceremony;

- Of the medals, the most prestigious is the Order of Australia medal
The Order of Australia is part of the Australian system of honours and awards;

it was established by the Queen on the 14th of February 1975;

it recognises achievement or meritorious service;

designs of the insignia of the Order are based on an individual ball of wattle flowers;

the insignia are convex golden discs adorned with beads and radiating lines surmounted by an enamelled crown, signifying the role of the Queen as Sovereign Head of the Order;

blue ribbons decorated with golden wattle motifs complete the insignia;

the colours which predominate, blue and gold, represent the sea which surrounds Australia and the colour of the then popularly accepted national flower – the wattle.
DID YOU KNOW?

- Queen Elizabeth II wore a coronation gown embroidered with the floral emblem of every country in the Commonwealth. Can you see our wattle?

- When Queen Elizabeth II visited Australia in 1954 she was presented with a gift from the people of Australia;

- It was a wattle brooch, the most expensive piece of jewellery ever made in Australia up to that date;

- It consisted of 150 diamonds, ranging from rare deep golden, for the wattle, to white for the ti-tree blossom parts of the design.

- The Prime Minister, Mr Menzies, presented the brooch to her majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

- Queen Elizabeth II wore a wattle adorned hat at her unveiling of the Australia - America memorial in Canberra.

- A ball dress, with a motif of wattle sprays, was worn by the Queen at a State banquet in Sydney.

- The Queen wore a wattle embossed suit when she met Prime Minister Rudd at Buckingham Palace prior to the G20 Summit, 31 March 2009.
International Appreciation of Wattle

Since 1992, the Acacia Appreciation Circle of Hiroshima, Japan, has sent hundreds of yellow ribbon bows to ANBG for sharing with the public on Wattle Day.

These have been made by the school children of Hiroshima and are received as a gesture of friendship, hope and renewal.

They came with the message
'This ribbon is to wish you a happy life and may your dreams come true'

It is said that a wattle was the first plant to bloom after the tragic events of Hiroshima in 1945.
Myth 4 Flowering plants cause hayfever

Reality: Seasonal allergic rhinitis, commonly known as hayfever, is caused by allergy to pollen, rather than hay. Pollen allergy tends to be due to air borne pollen from wind pollinated grass, weed and tree species. By contrast, the pollen of flowering plants is large and sticky, does not blow very far, and requires birds and bees for pollination. Therefore, when people complain that scented flowers trouble them, it is usually due to chemical irritation from the perfume that makes them sneeze rather than the pollen.

The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) is the peak professional body of Clinical Allergists and Immunologists in Australia and New Zealand. This information bulletin is also available as a brochure. Inquiries: Email: education@allergy.org.au

Wattle pollen is often believed to be the culprit when people get the sneezes and snuffles - hayfever - or asthma. Wattle gets the blame but is it really the cause?

Medical researchers who specialise in allergies say that although some people are undoubtedly allergic to wattle pollen, asthma due to wattle pollen in uncommon! The Asthma Foundation of NSW supports this view.

You may be able to enjoy some of Australia's most beautiful and characteristic plants - wattles. Find out if wattle is the real culprit by being tested. Ask your family doctor for a referral to the: Allergy Clinic, Concord Repatriation General Hospital, in Sydney, or contact:

the Secretary,
Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy,
PO Box 204, Mt. Albert, Victoria, 3127.
Ph. (03) 9890 4374 Fax (03) 9899 6920
for the name and address of the nearest allergy clinic or private allergist who will arrange your test.