



Biography: Cathy Offord

Dr Cathy Offord PhD is a Research Scientist, specialising in conservation and horticultural research at Mount Annan Botanic Garden in Sydney. Cathy has worked with the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney for 14 years and has been involved in the research of the Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*) since its discovery in 1994.

Cathy's specific role is to oversee conservation and horticulture research on the Wollemi Pine at Mount Annan Botanic Garden. This involves growing seedlings from the natural population in a controlled environment, and researching the biological aspects of its growth in the wild. Findings from Cathy's research have been incorporated into the Wollemi Pine Recovery Plan, a document which outlines the steps required to conserve and protect the ancient plant species.

Cathy and her team have also researched the basic horticultural requirements for the Wollemi Pine and have passed on this knowledge to assist Wollemi Australia in the commercial propagation of the species. Wollemi Australia, a joint venture between the Queensland Department of Primary Industries Forestry and Birkdale Nursery, is responsible for the propagation and worldwide release of the Wollemi Pine in 2005/6.

A pioneering conservationist, Cathy initiated the RBG Plant Conservation Policy in 1994 to facilitate the development of conservation strategies for Australia's rare and endangered species. Currently she is a member of numerous 'Recovery Teams' assisting with the conservation of individual species and habitats of Australian native flora by researching and implementing conservation measures inside and outside of their natural habitats.

In addition to her passion for the Wollemi Pine, Cathy has been a champion in researching Australian native plants. She began with favourites such as the New South Wales floral emblem the Waratah (*Telopea*), and other protected species such as the Flannel flower (*Actinotus helianthi*), conducting horticultural research and development into cut flower and pot plant varieties for the nursery industry.

Cathy has appeared regularly on Australian television programs such as Quantum, Gardening Australia, Totally Wild and Burke's Backyard. She also consults on a regular basis with national science media. Cathy is a member of the Australian and the International Society for Horticultural Science, as well as being a nationally accredited plant breeder (PBR).

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Further information:

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