

Wollemi Pine

Some selected facts and statements about this iconic tree in BBG

(Signage in the Sydney Botanic gardens was the source for a lot of this information)

- Presumed extinct until discovered in 1994 by David Noble, a NSW National Parks and Wildlife Officer who was abseiling into the deep rainforest gorge 150kms from Sydney.
- Noble observed a group of trees he hadn't seen before and brought back a branch from this small grove of unusual seedlings and mature trees on ledges in the deep gorge
- The only match botanists could find was from fossil records dating back 90 million years
- Noble had stumbled upon the world's oldest and rarest tree species, belonging to a 200 million year old plant
- Botanical find of the century
- Discovery is equivalent of finding a dinosaur today.
- Thought to be widespread across Gondwana , an ancient supercontinent, that existed before Australia broke off from Antarctica.
- Now the pines (106 adult trees) only grow in 3 known rainforest gorges where they cling to steep , moist hillsides, surrounded by rugged protective mountains
- Several Wollemi pines have been assessed as having rootstock that is more than 1000 years old.
- *Wollemia nobilis*
Wollemi is an aboriginal word meaning " look around you, keep your eyes open and watch out".
Nobilis is a reflection of its noble majestic qualities and honours David Noble
- Broad-leaved conifer
- Bears male and female cones at the tips of its branches
- Unusual bud development and branching habit
- Bark looks like bubbling chocolate
- Sprouts multiple trunks (coppicing)
- Araucaraceae family and its relatives are the Kauri, Norfolk Island, Hoop , Bunya and Monkey Puzzle pines.
- Rainforest emergent tree, used to being under a canopy and likes filtered light.
- Temp range 11-37 and least tolerant of high temperatures. New plantings doing very well in Southern England.
- Propagation with cuttings is more satisfactory than dangling from helicopters and trying to extract seeds from the tips of the pines in the gorge where it was found as was done initially.
- Took about 15 years from discovery for its commercialization to take place. Now available as garden and indoor plants and home gardeners are contributing to its conservation. Royalties from Wollemi Pine sales fund ongoing conservation research.