



ACT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2011

SUSTAINABILITY STORIES

Yarralumla's historic seed bank



Germinated seedlings at Yarralumla Nursery (Photo courtesy of ACT Government)



Seed recording at the Yarralumla Nursery (Photo courtesy of ACT Government)



Seeds stored in old lolly jars (Photo courtesy of ACT Government)

Almost 1700 different native plant species have been recorded in the ACT, including flowering grasses, herbs, shrubs and trees. Among these are a number of vulnerable and threatened species. Harvesting seed and storing it in seed banks is particularly important for the recovery of areas of high conservation value including endangered ecological communities. Seed harvesting helps conserve genetic diversity and enables the recovery of vulnerable species and assists in revegetating areas of land where large plant losses have occurred. With proper storage, many seeds will remain viable over very long periods making seed banks an optimal conservation strategy.

The Yarralumla seed bank is home to a living record of every seed collected, purchased and stored at the Yarralumla Nursery since 1948. It has an important role in preserving the biodiversity of ACT's flora.

With a collection of around 221 genus varieties and almost 2000 species of seed, the historic nursery asset contains recordings from as far back as January 1948 – a small sample packet of *Juniperus Californica* which was recorded by the Superintendent Institute of Forestry Genetics California USA.

The Yarralumla seed bank houses many varieties of *Acacia*, *Melaleuca*, *Callistemon* and *Leptospermum* and around 170 different types of Eucalyptus, some dating back to the 1960s. These species have been planted across Canberra and surrounding areas and remain viable for use today.

Contained in old lolly jars, the locally collected seeds, and those sourced from around the world, are kept in cool, dry and dark conditions and labelled with their species type, weight and a registration number. A portion of the seed is stored in a separate location in fire-proof barrels to further protect and safeguard them.

With the support of an ACT Heritage Grant through the Australian Garden History Society, the Yarralumla Nursery seed ledgers are being digitised to preserve these valuable records. They will be made available on the Archives ACT website for future reference. Yarralumla Nursery's seed bank is an invaluable link to Canberra's past and a safeguard in protecting the Territory's native flora into the future.

Yarralumla Nursery is an ACT Government owned business within the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate. As one of its core businesses the Nursery grows and supplies plant material for ACT Government landscape development projects.

For more information on the seed banks go to the Yarralumla Nursery website, http://www.tams.act.gov.au/live/yarralumla_nursery