



MEDIA RELEASE

New NT Millennium Seed Bank Project Curator

A new researcher with the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts, has moved to Central Australia to become the NT Seed Bank Curator as part of the international Millennium Seed Bank Project (MSBP).

The MSBP aims to collect 10 per cent of the world's seed-bearing flora by 2010 and safeguard 24,000 global plants species from extinction including arid plant species from central Australia.

New NT MSBP curator Alice Quarmby, who has moved from South Australia where she was based at the Seed Conservation Centre (SCC), Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, said she was excited about coordinating the collection of seeds for the MSBP in the NT.

“At the SCC I undertook research into the seed biology of South Australian threatened plant species, mainly focussing on discovering the natural factors that control the germination of specific species,” Ms Quarmby said.

“In my new role I will be coordinating the collection of Northern Territory seeds, as well as establishing a strong basis for conducting research into the biology and germination mechanisms of individual species.”

Ms Quarmby said her team is working as part of a larger international team of dry land countries including Jordan and the United States to collect 10,000 seeds for each species, some of which are threatened or unique to NT.

“We are on track in the NT with our collecting targets and have already lodged close to 200 species of our total target of 550 species by the year 2010,” Ms Quarmby said.

“The MSBP is an international project at the Royal Botanical Gardens, based in Kew in the United Kingdom, so half the batch collected will be sent to the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew in the United Kingdom for long term storage in the international seed bank.

“The other half will remain in the NT for storage and research, so we can learn about desert plant germination requirements in relation to a range of environmental pressures such as unpredictable rainfall, fire, weed invasion and climate change.

“In order to truly safeguard species from extinction it is important to know how to germinate the seeds.

“One of my main objectives is to establish germination protocols for threatened species, which can be utilised in recovery plans of such species.”

Ms Quarmby said Paul Smith, the international head of the MSBP, accompanied by Tom North, the Australian Coordinator, are currently touring all Australian partners of the MSBP.

“They will spend this Saturday in Alice Springs, at the Alice Springs Desert Park (ASDP) where Mr Smith will relate the international progress of the MSBP,” Ms Quarmby said.

“It will also be a great opportunity for both visitors to tour the Northern Territory MSBP facilities to discuss the project and future directions.”

Miss Quarmby said that due to the good rain over summer excellent collecting conditions are anticipated, which will help meet our targets.

“Once the bulk of the collection season is over, the germination trials and research will become the main focus,” she said.

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Media Note _ For more information contact Alice Quarmby on 8951 8282 or Catherine Nano on 8951 8222

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