

Media Release:

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Millennium Seed Bankers Visit UK

The Northern Territory Government Millennium Seed Bank Project (MSBP) team have recently returned from a two week trip to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, UK as part of an international seed conservation program.

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts established a seed bank facility in Alice Springs to ensure that native Territory flora is protected for the future as part of the international MSBP.

Seed Bank Curator Alice Quarmby and Seed Bank Technician Debbie Randall said that seed banking is an important conservation tool that preserves native species in the case of future environmental degradation.

“The MSBP aims to collect ten percent of the world’s seed-bearing flora by 2010 to safeguard 24,000 global plant species from extinction, including many arid plant species from Central Australia,” Miss Quarmby said.

“The trip was a great opportunity to bring international knowledge and experience about seed conservation techniques back to the Territory.

“The visit was a great success, we’ve been able to fill the gaps in our knowledge and gain a worldwide perspective of seed banking.”

After a week long course based on overall understanding of issues and components to seed banking techniques, they both spent another week further honing their respective roles.

“My time was spent with the Seed Conservation Department focusing on curation and research as well as establishing contacts for the development of future collaborative research projects,” Miss Quarmby said.

Mrs Randall worked with one of the seed curation teams gaining hands-on experience in all aspects of seed banking processes: cleaning, quality assessments, germination testing and the final process of banking the seeds.

“Prior to the trip my expertise was with the collecting and cleaning aspects,” Mrs Randall said.

“Working with the team at RBG Kew was extremely beneficial to consolidating knowledge of all aspects and in particular allowed me to strengthen my experience in germination and banking.”

The Millennium Seed Bank Project involves over 50 countries worldwide and is managed by the Seed Conservation Department, Royal Botanic Gardens at Wakehurst Place in Sussex, UK.

The Northern Territory MSBP is looking for volunteers to assist in collecting and processing these precious seeds. Interested community members can register their interest by emailing alice.quarmby@nt.gov.au.

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Alice Quarmby on 8951 8282 before 4.30pm today or after 8am Tuesday 25 March

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