



MEDIA STATEMENT

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne weathers the weather

The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne is weathering the heat wave as best it can, according to Richard Barley, Director.

"The Gardens are in reasonable shape, but some individual plants have either been scorched by the heat, or are wilting," he said.

"There is little doubt that given the long-term nature of the drought, and the likely concurrent and continuing effects of climate change, the living landscape is under some degree of water stress."

"Many plants will recover from the wilting but the scorched foliage will remain until new growth occurs," said Mr Barley.

The Gardens are concerned that some particular species are at risk from prolonged extreme heat, notably those from cooler climates.

"As a botanic garden with a conservation mission, it is crucial that any rare or threatened species are appropriately conserved, either on site, or at other locations.

"We are using this hot spell to assess the suitability of various plants for the local climate," said Mr Barley.

"This apparent shift to hotter, drier climatic conditions is likely to mean that certain plant species, which in the past may have been marginally suited, may no longer be sensible selections for planting, or viable in the long-term."

He said there may be 'new' species that come onto planting lists, from parts of Australia or the world that have conditions similar to those that Victoria is moving towards.

Media inquiries:

Penny Underwood on (03) 9818 8540.

Hints and Tips

- Mulching garden beds will reduce water loss through evaporation from the soil (but ensure that the soil is moist before you mulch) and will keep roots cooler
- Select plants that are suited to the planting location (ie. don't put tender plants that need cool conditions or shade in the full afternoon sun or places exposed to hot northerly winds etc.)
- Group plants together than have similar needs
- Irrigate as allowed under the current water restrictions in the cool of the morning or evening

- Leave scorched foliage on the plant - if it is pruned off it will encourage new (soft) growth that will burn again, and if left on it will protect the more tender foliage underneath
- Minimise 'feeding' as lush growth is not desirable in these conditions
- If practicable, temporary shading can be applied over tender plants to get them through these periods (but they may not be a good choice in the long term).