

COOTAMUNDRA WATTLE HARMS OUR LOCAL NATIVES

Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*) not only invades bushland, displacing plants indigenous to the area, but could also be the end of naturally growing Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) in some areas.



Cootamundra Wattle flowering (top)
leaf (right)

Silver Wattle is indigenous to Mount Alexander shire, and before Europeans arrived, it grew naturally along waterways and gullies in the district.

Cootamundra Wattle, which is native to a small area west of Cootamundra in central NSW, has been introduced as a garden plant in many areas outside its natural range. The problem is that it crosses with Silver Wattle. This means that the seeds produced by Silver Wattles growing near Cootamundra Wattle may no longer produce Silver Wattle seedlings. These seedlings are likely to be a cross between the two. It's like a feral bull getting into a cattle breeding stud with no morning after pill available.

Distinguishing between them

Silver Wattle is a tree 5 m (or more, especially in wetter areas) with grey-green leaves and fairly upright clusters of yellow flowers July-September. It often suckers.

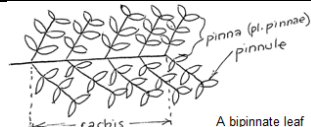


Clump of young Silver Wattles

Cootamundra Wattle is a shrub or small tree about 4m high with silvery-grey leaves and dense, hanging clusters of bright yellow flowers July-August. Its leaves are shorter than Silver Wattle's, with fewer leaflets. The bottom pair point backwards. It does not sucker. Both have bipinnate (fern-like) leaves. Hybrids have characteristics of both.

Distinguishing features of the leaves:

	No. of pairs of pinnae	Midrib (rachis) length	Pinnules		
			Size	No. of pairs	Surface
Cootamundra Wattle	2-6	1-4cm	Mostly 5-7mm x 1-1.5mm. Shorter towards ends of pinnae.	12-20	Usually hairless. (Occasionally a few marginal hairs.)
Silver Wattle	8-20	4-10cm	2-5mm x c. 0.5mm. Approx. equal length throughout the pinnae.	20-40	Minutely hairy.



A bipinnate leaf

What you can do to help Silver Wattle

- **Don't** plant Cootamundra Wattle.
- **Don't** sell it or give it away.
- Cut down any Cootamundras (including hybrids) on your land. Cutting them down before they seed will prevent another season's seeds joining the soil seed bank. Any cut down with seeds on must **not** be put in green waste collections, as this will spread the seeds.
- Ask Council to remove them from your nature strip.
- Ask DELWP or Parks Victoria to remove them from crown land.
- Explain the problem to people who don't know about it and ask plant sellers (including at markets) **not** to sell Cootamundras (in any form – some forms are claimed to be sterile, but this is not easily verified and they still popularise Cootamundra Wattle).



Silver Wattle flowers and leaves



Hybrid leaf

Which wattles are OK to plant?

It's best to plant local wattles, as they can't become environmental weeds here. Examples are Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) – which has the bright yellow flowers of Cootamundra – and Wirilda (*A. provincialis*) which has the bushiness of Cootamundra.

Other non-local wattles that are environmental weeds in the Castlemaine district and **shouldn't** be planted here include Early Black Wattle (*A. decurrens*), White Sallow Wattle (*A. floribunda*), Ovens Wattle (*A. pravissima*) and Flinders Ranges Wattle (*A. iteaphylla*).



Cootamundra Wattle invading bushland

More information and contacts

castlemaineflora.org.au.

Connecting Country 5472 1594

DELWP 13 6186

Friend or Foe? A Guide to Fern-leaf Wattles in North Central Victoria leaflet from North Central Catchment Management Authority. 5448 7124

Mount Alexander Shire Council 5471 1700

Parks Victoria 13 1963

Slattery B, Perkins E & Silver B, *Wattles of the Mount Alexander Region* (Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests, 2018).

vicflora.rbg.vic.gov/flora

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