



Australian Government
Australian National Botanic Gardens

MEDIA RELEASE

10 March 2011

A closer look at the hybrid life of lichens

Today the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens will launch a new website taking an in-depth look at Australia's lichens.

The website is the third in a series sponsored by the Friends to give everyone, from gardeners to students and academics, a chance to better understand Australia's lesser-known organisms.

Executive Director of the Gardens Judy West said lichens were unusual because they were not single organisms but actually close associations between fungi and algae.

"There are more than 3,000 species of lichen in Australia," Dr West said.

"Lichens are really common and widespread, but most Australians don't know all that much about them.

"However they have many potential uses. Lichens are vulnerable to environmental disturbance so they can be used as pollution indicators.

"Lichens are also used in making dyes and perfumes, as well as in traditional medicines."

The website contains over 300 photos, diagrams and maps showing the diversity and distribution of lichens in Australia and their relationships with lichens elsewhere.

Today's launch features chemist Professor Jack Elix explaining why he is captivated by lichens, Australian National Herbarium curator Dr Christine Cargill and naturalist Heino Lepp.

The launch takes place at the Australian National Botanic Gardens theatrette from 12.30pm.

For more information visit the Australian lichen website at <http://www.anbg.gov.au/lichen/>

For more information on the Australian National Botanic Gardens visit <http://www.anbg.gov.au/gardens/index.html>

Launch Details: Thursday 10 March at 12.30pm in the Theatrette at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, Clunis Ross Street, Acton ACT.

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