

PLANTS AT RISK IN THE ILLAWARRA

INTRODUCTION TO TABLE 1.

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The list of plants in Table 1 (see attached) is of special significance as it concerns plants which are known to occur in the district and are not classified as "Rare and Threatened" by Briggs, Leigh et al (ROTAP). On a regional scale however these plants can be considered as Rare and Threatened and can be classified in a similar way using the ROTAP system of Extinct, Endangered, Vulnerable, Rare and Poorly known.

The species listed here are of importance in terms of geographic distribution of localised populations disjunct from other occurrences or at southern or northern limits of distribution: e.g. Tuckeroo, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, which is restricted to an area of seacliffs and nearby slopes a few hundred metres north of Coalcliff. There are only about 10 mature plants, but much natural regeneration from thousands of small seedlings less than 10cm tall to about one hundred or so saplings 1-2m tall. This species is not known to occur further south and the next population to the north is around Port Hacking (Bundeena), 22km away, where Tuckeroo is both widespread and reasonably common.

This list is by no means complete and due to the dynamic nature of our state of knowledge of the local flora and the inherent dynamism of plants and human interaction with the natural environment. Given the degree of human induced habitat loss and change in the local area these lists are likely to become longer and longer.

Most of our local plant communities are now listed as Endangered Ecological Communities especially the lowland plant associations. However some localised plant communities are still not listed and deserve to be: e.g. *Melaleuca armillaris* open scrub/low forest which is restricted to latite ridges and slopes between Albion Park/Oak Flats and Jamberoo/Kiama. Our mangrove and salt marsh communities also deserve to be listed as does lowland riparian rainforest and dry rainforest. Further research and field work needs to be undertaken to identify other plants and plant communities which need listing and protection.

Most of these plants would have been more widespread but their habitats or environments have been largely destroyed and often severely altered and degraded over the last 200 years, to the degree that these plants and their habitats are at serious risk of extinction and so are currently considered threatened.