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## The Gardens welcomes new seed conservation biologist

Plant conservation and the increased collection and storage of Australian native seeds has always been a high priority for the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Now with the release of its new ten year management plan, the Gardens is excited to welcome a seed conservation biologist to expand its science and seed bank programs.

Seed conservation biologist and Curtin University postgraduate, Lydia Guja will help the Gardens achieve these goals by expanding the Gardens' seed banking and research activities.

"The functions of the Australian National Botanic Gardens' Seed Bank include the long-term storage of conservation seed collections - particularly rare and threatened flora," Lydia said.

"By working at the Gardens' Seed Bank, I hope to increase the number of plant species stored there. I also want to conduct some exciting research into the seed germination of important or endangered Australian plants to assist their conservation and restoration.

"Seed banks are one of the best ways to conserve species and provide an insurance policy against extinction. Many seeds can be stored for long periods of time.

"The Gardens' Seed Bank gives us and many other institutions across Australia an opportunity to germinate plants that may be rare or endangered, while also using the seed collection to conduct a broader range of research into Australia's flora."

Reflecting on her past, Lydia says that she has always had a passion for the environment.

"During my undergraduate degree, I was introduced to seed biology at Kings Park in Western Australia and was amazed by the many colours, shapes, sizes, textures and smells of native seeds - so getting to work with seeds every day makes it worth leaving my family, friends and the beautiful Perth beaches behind!" she said.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens' Seed Bank supplies seed to conservation and research institutions through the plant release program. It also supports the research of the *Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research* and the *Australian alpine seed ecology project* in collaboration with the Australian National University and the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens is home to a large and ever-increasing collection of Australian native seeds and in particular holds the largest national collection of Australian alpine seeds.

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