

A brief history of golden wattle

1 September is *National Wattle Day*. *Acacia pycnantha*, commonly known as Golden Wattle, is the national floral emblem of Australia.

Acacia pycnantha enjoyed popular acceptance as Australia's national flower for much of this century but it was not proclaimed as the national floral emblem until 1988, the year of Australia's bicentenary. The Gazettal is dated 1 September 1988, signed by the Governor General, Sir Ninian Stephen, on 19 August 1988.

A ceremony was held on 1 September 1988 at the Australian National Botanic Gardens when the Minister for Home Affairs, Robert Ray, made the formal announcement, and the Prime Minister's wife, Mrs Hazel Hawke, planted a Golden Wattle.

Four years later, in 1992, 1 September was formally declared *National Wattle Day* by the Minister for the Environment, Mrs Ros Kelly at another ceremony at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. The Gazettal is dated 24 August 1992 and was signed by the Governor General, Bill Hayden, on 23 June 1992.

Sprigs of wattle were sent by mothers to sons overseas in the First World War to remind them of home.

In 1998 sprigs of wattle were used as a symbol of remembrance and mourning by the then Governor-General, Sir William Deane, to commemorate the young Australians tragically lost in the Swiss canyon disaster.

This symbolic use of wattle was repeated in 2002 when sprigs of wattle were used at the memorial service at the Great Hall of Parliament House for the victims of the Bali bombings.

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