



Exotic *Eucalyptus nitens* plantations established among native eucalypt populations in north-east Tasmania. Ben Lomond National Park is in the background.

**Gene flow from introduced
Eucalyptus plantations into
native eucalypt species**

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Declarations

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

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Abstract

There has been a massive expansion of *Eucalyptus* plantations in Australia in the last decade. As most eucalypt species are native to Australia, this has raised concerns about genetic pollution of native species gene pools. To assess the risk of genetic pollution, five key aspects of gene flow from *E. nitens* plantations in Tasmania were studied. Firstly, the pattern of pollen dispersal from plantations into native *E. ovata* forests was examined at three sites. The frequency of F₁ hybrids among 119 000 progeny, grown from open-pollinated seed collected from *E. ovata* trees at varying distances from *E. nitens* plantations, was determined. A leptokurtic pattern of pollen flow was evident, with the mean level of hybridisation at the plantation boundaries (0-100 m) being 14%, dropping to 1% by 200-300 m and continuing at this level to the extent of the studied areas (max. 1600 m). Secondly, the first exotic *E. ovata* x *nitens* F₁ hybrids actually established in the wild were discovered and verified using morphological and allozyme analyses. Thirdly, field trials were established to assess the fitness of the exotic *E. ovata* x *nitens* F₁ hybrids in the wild. The hybrids displayed poorer early-age performance relative to their pure *E. ovata* half-sibs. However, many were still alive and growing successfully two years after planting. Fourthly, surveys of flowering time were conducted on native *Symphyomyrtus* species, which were potentially at risk of gene flow from plantations. This was combined with a spatial analysis of the proximity of eucalypt plantations to each native species, and used to produce an overall assessment of the potential for exotic hybridisation and gene flow. These results indicated that at least eight of the 16 *Symphyomyrtus* species in Tasmania appear to have significant potential

for pollination by *E. nitens*, and will need further study. Finally, the crossability of *E. nitens* pollen on native female *Symphyomyrtus* species was assessed using artificial pollination techniques. A number of species did not produce hybrids with *E. nitens*, indicating that post-mating barriers may be acting to prevent hybridisation. Overall results suggest that the main risk of genetic pollution in Tasmania is limited to a few species. Of those species, the ability of first and later generation hybrids to survive to reproductive maturity and backcross with native populations, allowing the introgression of exotic genes, is yet to be assessed.

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Table of contents

Declarations	I
Abstract	II
Acknowledgements	IV
Table of contents.....	V
Format of thesis chapters.....	VIII
Publications and other output from PhD candidature	IX
Refereed publications	IX
Research reviewed by other authors.....	IX
Conference proceedings	IX
Research reports	X
Oral presentations	X
CHAPTER 1	1
General introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Case study: exotic gene flow from <i>Eucalyptus nitens</i> in Tasmania	6
CHAPTER 2	8
Pollen dispersal from exotic eucalypt plantations	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Materials and methods.....	10
2.3 Results	12
2.4 Discussion	13
CHAPTER 3	17
Gene flow between introduced and native <i>Eucalyptus</i> species: exotic hybrids are establishing in the wild.....	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.2 Materials and methods.....	19
3.2.1 Field and glasshouse work	19
3.2.2 Morphometric assessment	21
3.2.3 Allozyme assessment	24
3.3 Results	25
3.3.1 Morphological characters of putative hybrids.....	25

3.3.2 Verification of hybrids	28
3.3.3 Frequency of hybrids in the open-pollinated seedlots.....	31
3.3.4 Distribution of exotic hybrids and <i>E. nitens</i> wildlings in the wild.....	33
3.4 Discussion	34
CHAPTER 4	39
Early-age selection limits invasive capacity of exotic F₁ hybrids in <i>Eucalyptus</i>	39
4.1 Introduction	39
4.2 Materials and methods.....	41
4.2.1 Trial site and genetic material	41
4.2.2 Sowing trial	43
4.2.3 Triangle trial.....	45
4.2.4 Pair trial	45
4.2.5 Trial measurements	46
4.2.6 Analysis	47
4.3 Results	47
4.3.1 Germination and early growth (Sowing trial)	47
4.3.2 Post-establishment fitness (Triangle and Pair trials).....	50
4.4 Discussion	52
CHAPTER 5	58
Pre-mating barriers to gene flow from exotic <i>Eucalyptus nitens</i> plantations in Tasmania	58
5.1 Introduction	58
5.2 Materials and methods.....	60
5.2.1 Flowering observations	60
5.2.2 Analysis of the time of flowering.....	62
5.2.3 Analysis of interspecific flowering overlap	63
5.2.4 Spatial analysis.....	64
5.3 Results	65
5.3.1 Patterns in the time of flowering	65
5.3.2 Patterns of interspecific flowering overlap	68
5.3.3 Spatial proximity of plantations to each native eucalypt species.....	72
5.3.4 Assessment of the potential for <i>E. nitens</i> to pollinate native species.....	73
5.4 Discussion	75
5.5 Appendix	81
CHAPTER 6	83
Post-mating barriers to gene flow from exotic <i>Eucalyptus nitens</i> plantations in Tasmania	83
6.1 Introduction	83
6.2 Materials and methods.....	86

6.2.1 Crossing methods	86
6.2.2 Pollen and pollination.....	87
6.2.3 Seed collection, processing, germination and seedling growth.....	88
6.2.4 Assessment of seedling morphology	90
6.2.5 Analysis	95
6.3 Results	97
6.3.1 Controlled pollination.....	97
6.3.1.1 Seed development, germination and seedling growth.....	97
6.3.1.2 Seedling morphology	100
6.3.2 Supplementary pollination	112
6.3.3.1 Verification of hybridisation	112
6.3.3.2 Levels of hybridisation.....	116
6.4 Discussion	117
6.5 Appendix	123
CHAPTER 7	128
General discussion: risk assessment and management of exotic gene flow from plantations in Tasmania.....	128
7.1 Introduction	128
7.2 Framework of risk assessment	129
7.2.1 Identification of conservation values	129
7.2.2 Pollen quantity.....	129
7.2.2.1 Age to first flowering and flower abundance.....	129
7.2.2.2 “Source vs sink”	130
7.2.3 Pollen dispersal.....	131
7.2.4 Divergence in season of flowering.....	132
7.2.5 Crossability.....	133
7.2.6 Post-dispersal fitness	134
7.2.6.1 F ₁ hybrid establishment and vegetative fitness	134
7.2.6.2 F ₁ hybrid reproductive fitness	135
7.2.6.3 Potential for later generation hybridisation	136
7.2.7 Guidelines based on Taxonomic relatedness.....	136
7.3 Management of the species at risk	137
7.4 Concluding comments.....	138
References	140
General appendix: publications and other output from PhD candidature.....	164

Format of thesis chapters

The experimental chapters of this thesis (Chapters 2 to 6) have been written in the format of published scientific journal articles. Because Chapters 2 and 3 have been, or are in the process of being published (see following page), sections of their text are repeated in the general introduction of the thesis. For Chapters 4, 5 and 6 however, broad introductory text into the general area of research has not been included, to prevent excessive repetition. Despite this, some themes and text are still repeated within these chapters. Abstracts, acknowledgements and lists of references have been combined into single versions for the whole document. Figures and tables have also been re-numbered.

Publications and other output from PhD candidature

Refereed publications

Potts BM, Barbour RC, Hingston AB, Vaillancourt RE (2003) Turner Review No. 6.

Genetic pollution of native eucalypt gene pools - identifying the risks. *Australian Journal of Botany* **51**, 1-25. (see General appendix)

Barbour RC, Potts BM, Vaillancourt RE (2003) Gene flow between introduced and

native *Eucalyptus*: exotic hybrids are establishing in the wild. *Australian Journal of Botany* **51**, 429-439. (see General appendix)

Barbour RC, Potts BM, Vaillancourt RE (in review) Pollen dispersal from exotic

eucalypt plantations. *Conservation Genetics*.

Research reviewed by other authors

Duncan F (2003) Hybrid eyes. *Forest Practices News* **5**, 6-8.

Strauss SY (2001) Benefits and risks of biotic exchange between *Eucalyptus* plantations

and native Australian forests. *Austral Ecology* **26**, 447-457.

Conference proceedings

Barbour RC, Potts BM, Vaillancourt RE, Tibbits WN, Wiltshire RJE (2000)

Hybridisation between plantation and native eucalypts in Tasmania. In 'Hybrid breeding and genetics of forest trees. Proceedings of QFRI/CRC-SPF symposium, 9-14th April 2000 Noosa, Queensland, Australia'. (Eds HS Dungey, MJ Dieters and DG Nikles) pp. 395-399. (Department of Primary Industries: Brisbane). (Paper and poster presentation - awarded prize for best poster) (see

General appendix)

Barbour RC, Potts BM, Vaillancourt RE (2002) Gene flow between introduced plantation and native *Eucalyptus*. Proceedings of 'IUFRO symposium on population and evolutionary genetics of forest trees, Stara Lesna, Slovakia, August 25-29' pp. 245 (Arbora Publishers, Zvolen). (Abstract and oral presentation)

Barbour RC, Lopez GA, Potts BM (2002) Flowering time as a barrier to introgression in *Eucalyptus*. Proceedings of 'IUFRO symposium on population and evolutionary genetics of forest trees, Stara Lesna, Slovakia, August 25-29' pp. 81 (Arbora Publishers, Zvolen). (Abstract and poster presentation) (see General appendix for poster)

Research reports

Potts BM, Barbour R, Hingston A (2001) 'The risk of genetic pollution from farm forestry using eucalypt species and hybrids.' Rural Industries Research and Development, Joint Venture Agroforestry Program, report 01/114, RIRDC, Kingston ACT. (refereed invited report)

Report summary - <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/AFT/01-114sum.html>

Full report - <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/AFT/01-114.pdf>

Barbour RC, Potts BM, Vaillancourt RE (2000) Establishment report for *E. ovata* x *E. nitens* hybrid trials (CRC2000_1) at Arnolds Block, Lilydale, Tasmania. Technical Report 75. CRC for Sustainable Production Forestry, Hobart.

Oral presentations

Barbour RC (2001) Gene flow between plantation and native *Eucalyptus*. Introductory PHD Seminar, School of Plant Science, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia.

Barbour RC (2001) The potential for and risks of genetic pollution. Oral presentation at the CRC-SPF Annual General Meeting, Caloundra, Australia.

Barbour RC (2003) Gene flow between introduced and native *Eucalyptus*. Oral presentation for the CRC-SPF board, CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products building, Hobart, Australia.

Barbour RC (2003) Gene flow between introduced and native *Eucalyptus*. Concluding PhD seminar, School of Plant Science, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia. (see CD pouch on inside of back cover)