



Native Pine Grove - Family *Araucariaceae*

fact sheet

At the start of the Jurassic period more than 200 million years ago the trees of the *Araucariaceae* (Bunya Pine) family appeared north of the equator but also in the Australian fossil records.

By the end of the Cretaceous period around 65 million years ago the fossil records indicated the extinction of the dinosaurs. There is a theory that the loss of dinosaurs was caused by a massive meteorite hitting the northern hemisphere. At the same time the *Araucariaceae* forests in the northern hemisphere disappeared. The *Araucariaceae* forests in the southern hemisphere survived.

All *Araucariaceae* are conifers and are cone-bearing, belonging to a bigger group the Gymnosperms – plants with naked seeds. Gymnosperms evolved before flowering plants – Angiosperms.

Until the 1990's *Araucariaceae* consisted of only two known genera *Agathis* and *Araucaria*. *Agathis* has 20 species including the Queensland Kauri (*A. robusta*). Where as *Araucaria* has 19 species including three Australian species, the Hoop pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*), the Bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) and the Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*).

In 1994 a tree was discovered in a canyon in the Wollemi National Park north-west of Sydney. The tree had cones and leaves found in the family *Araucariaceae*, and while the seed and cone structure were the same, the seeds were different, resulting in a new genus and species.

The new genus was named *Wollemia* and the species was named *nobilis* meaning noble, after the discoverer Park Ranger, David Noble. A paper was published in the scientific journal *Telopea* March 1995 announcing the discovery of the *Wollemia nobilis*. The tree became part of the family *Araucariaceae*. Australia is the only place in the world that has the three genera – *Agathis*, *Araucaria* and *Wollemia* occurring naturally.

All three genera are represented in the Native Pine Grove located in Centennial Park and the species include:

- Queensland Kauri (*Agathis robusta*)
- Hoop pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*)
- Bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*)
- Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*)
- Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*)

REFERENCE / FURTHER READING

- The Wollemi Pine by James Woodford Publisher Text Publishing ISBN 1-876485-48-5
- Forest Trees of Australia by Boland, Brooker, Chippendale, Hall, Hyland, Johnston, Kleinig and Turner Publisher NELSON – CSIRO ISBN 0-17-006264-3
- Web site <http://www.wollemipine.com/index.php>

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