

All members are encouraged to follow these guidelines when collecting indigenous flora for the feeding of possums in care. Western Ringtail Possums are specialised foliivores, and require a large "bouquet" of tender young leaves every day in order to maintain a healthy gut. Fruit, bread, biscuits, etc. do not constitute a healthy diet for WRP. This means that possum carers need to frequently collect large quantities of foliage from appropriate sources. It is important that we understand how to do this with minimal impacts on the health of volunteers, possums, and native flora.

Health and Safety

Ensure your safety at all times, particularly in regard to road safety when verge collecting, and snake and insect bites in bushy areas. (The wearing of gators and gloves is recommended.) You are not covered by Possum Centre insurance whilst undertaking individual care activities.

Legal Requirements

Most Shires will require that you seek permission to collect foliage from council land, including parks and roadsides. Collection of foliage from National Parks is prohibited without a licence from DEC. (Scientific or Other Prescribed Purposes Licence.) Failure to do so can result in prosecution. Collection of leaves from private property is legal, but permission must be sought from the owners. The collection of Declared Rare Flora is prohibited on public and private land without the permission of the Minister for the Environment; a list of these species is available on the DEC website (www.dec.wa.gov.au)

Collection

Ensure that ecologically sustainable collection practices are used at all times.

Do not over collect leaves, branches and flowers from any one area. Unless site is to be cleared of vegetation, or particular tree is being removed, do not remove more than 10% of leaf or blossom material from any one tree.

Rotate your collection areas to allow vegetation to recover before collecting again.

Do not collect leaves from seedling trees (less than 1m high) unless they are obviously sprouting in an unwanted area e.g. footpath, firebreak, road verge. Peppermint trees often sprout in areas that are mowed, these are very suitable sites for picking.

Look out for trees that are sprouting new shoots after being limb pruned, or shoots sprouting from stumps after a tree has been removed. These are very suitable for collection.

Ensure that damage to surrounding vegetation is minimised and avoided, and that dieback and pathogen hygiene practices are observed, especially when moving between bush areas. Use secateurs to harvest leaves, and carry a 10% bleach water solution to spray blades as you move between areas and plant species. If you are entering bush areas, consider what pathogens you might be carrying on shoes and tyres.

Possum Health

Avoid collecting plants that are setting seed. As well as reducing regeneration, it is not fully understood how seeding changes toxin levels in plants, so they are best avoided to protect the health of possums in care. Many possums will also reject flowering peppermint, whilst other flowering plants (Grevillea, Callistemon etc) should be considered treats, and not form the bulk of a possum's diet due to the high sugar content. Try to

Appropriate Species

Be informed about species identification. If in doubt, take a small sample and have it identified by your local nursery or land care group. Your Shire will have a list of native species that grow in your area.

List of recommended species:

Native:

Agonis flexuosa (including dwarf species *A. flexuosa nana*, but avoid the red/purple foliage cultivar)
Acacia...
Grevillea
Banksia
Tassel Flower
Marri
Tuart
Jarrah?

Exotic species:

Flinders Wattle
Sydney Wattle
Rose prunings
Callistemon species
Grevillea species