

Arbor Day

Arbor Day was first celebrated in some Australian schools in 1890. ('Arbor' means it is to do with trees.) School grounds needed trees, to look attractive and provide shade. The adults thought that students would develop an interest in nature and a love of beauty by planting trees. This would then improve their characters and make them better people.

Schools were given free trees and shrubs to plant in special ceremonies. Students said poems and sang songs about trees, played music and listened to speeches by important visitors. There was not usually a public holiday, although other people also planted trees in parks or along roadsides.

By the First World War in 1914, Arbor Day was not so popular, although it was brought back in 1932. In 1947, Arbor Day was made part of Conservation Day. This later became Earth Day. Earth Day and Arbor Day are celebrated worldwide on 22 April. Many schools still plant trees on this day.

Wattle Day

Wattle Day was first celebrated in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide on 1 September 1910. The Australian Wattle League asked for the wattle to be the national flower because it is strong, doesn't waste water, can survive disasters like bushfires, and makes people think of golden happy years ahead. The date of Wattle Day was changed in 1916 to 1 August.

Wattle Day became a regular event in the 1920s and 1930s in all States and Territories except Western Australia and the Northern Territory. People were asked to plant wattle and wear it on their clothes; children's activities were held and money was raised for charity. After the Second World War, people lost interest in Wattle Day, but in the 1980s people began to talk about celebrating it again.

Some Red Cross groups began to use the idea to raise funds, and in 1992 the Governor-General announced that 1 September would be National Wattle Day all over Australia. Wattle has our national colours of green and gold, and is used on many Australian symbols.