

Mint Bush

Scientific Name:

Prostanthera marifolia

Conservation Status in NSW:

Critically Endangered



SPECIAL NOTE: The Mint Bush was presumed extinct until it was discovered in Warringah in 2001.

Description:

Mint Bush is a small shrub with aromatic foliage and delicate purple flowers.

Habitat:

Mint Bush is found in weathered clay soils with ironstone nodules and is only known at one location in Warringah.

It was previously known to exist only around Sydney Harbour but had not been sighted since the early 1900s. It was presumed extinct until it was discovered in the North Balgowlah area.

Threats:

Loss of habitat, encroachment of weeds and inappropriate fire intervals.

Community Action:

Warringah residents can help protect the remaining population of Mint Bush by planting local indigenous plants in their gardens to reduce the likelihood of weeds escaping into the bush.

Interesting Fact:

When this plant was first rediscovered in 2001 there was some uncertainty as to the species. As species are identified by small morphological variations it is necessary to compare the minute details against a known plant. There is another species of *Prostanthera* that is quite similar to *P. marifolia* called *Prostanthera densa*. Barry Conn, a botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) in Sydney, needed to find a preserved specimen to dissect to verify the species. There was only one preserved specimen kept in the RBG Herbarium and it could not be dissected as then there would be no examples left. Fortunately, a specimen was found in a European collection and this was sent to Sydney. Conn was then able to definitively state that the new collection was indeed *Prostanthera marifolia*, the plant that had previously been thought to be extinct.