



Plants



Plants play a vital role in supporting all life on Earth. The continuing decline of native vegetation threatens the health of humans, wildlife and ecosystems.

Plants form the basis of most ecosystems. They filter water and air, provide animal habitat, and regulate global climate. Identifying and protecting threatened plant species is vital to protecting local biodiversity.

Aboriginal peoples have maintained a deep and intricate relationship with plants. Ensuring the ongoing health of plants is a critical part of caring for Country.

Reduction in the number of plant species will directly affect other species. Land clearing, pollution, invasive species and climate change are major threats to plant biodiversity.

At a glance

How NSW is tracking

- Although the annual rate of native vegetation clearing for agriculture and infrastructure has been declining since 2018, it remains high compared to the previous decade.
- The Australian National University's *Australia's Environment 2023* report noted that woody native regrowth in NSW has been favourable in wet years.
- Modelling undertaken in the assessment of the NSW Biodiversity Indicator Program indicates that, without effective management, only 50% of the 657 plant species listed as threatened are predicted to survive in 100 years' time.

The big picture

- This topic's 'extent of native vegetation' and 'clearing of native vegetation' indicators align to the 'land system change' planetary boundary. Globally, this boundary has been crossed.
- This topic's 'ecological carrying capacity' and 'number of threatened species listed' indicators align to the 'biosphere integrity' planetary boundary. Globally, this boundary has been crossed.

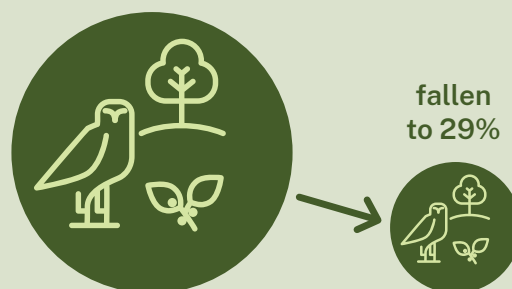
Threatened species

The number of threatened plant species **increased by 18** between 2020 and 2024, bringing the **total** to **657**.



Ecological carrying capacity
















The ability of NSW vegetation to support native plants, animals and ecosystems has **fallen to 29%** of natural levels before industrialisation.








NSW status and trend indicators

These indicators describe the status and condition of native plants in NSW.

Indicator	Environmental status	Environmental trend	Information reliability
Extent of native vegetation	 POOR	 Getting better Stable*** Getting worse	 Reasonable
Clearing of native vegetation	 POOR	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable
Habitat condition	 POOR	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable
Ecological carrying capacity	 POOR	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable
Number of threatened species listed	 POOR	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable

Indicator table scales

- **Environmental status:** Good, moderate, poor, unknown
- **Environmental trend:** Getting worse, stable, getting better, unknown
- **Information reliability:**  Good  Reasonable  Limited

Indicator definitions

Extent of native vegetation – the area of land covered by native vegetation across NSW.

Clearing of native vegetation – how much native vegetation has been cleared in NSW for agriculture and infrastructure.

Habitat condition – condition of native plant habitats.

Ecological carrying capacity – ability of vegetation across NSW to support native plant and animal species and ecosystems.

Number of threatened species listed – how many plant species are listed as critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable in the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.