

## Decolonization, Environmentalism and Nationalism in Australia and South Africa

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*Abstract:* Decolonization influenced the rise of environmental activism and thought in Australia and South Africa in ways that have been overlooked by national histories of environmentalism and imperial histories of decolonization. Australia and South Africa's political and cultural movement away from Britain and the Commonwealth during the 1960s is one important factor explaining why people in both countries created more, and more important, public indigenous botanic gardens than anywhere else in the world during that decade. Effective decolonization from Britain also influenced the rise of indigenous gardening and the growing popularity of native gardens at a critical period in gardening history. Most facets of modern gardening—using plants indigenous to the site or region, planting drought tolerant species, and seeing gardens as sites to help conserve regional and national floras—can be dated to those two decades. The interpretation advanced here adds to historical research tracing how the former Commonwealth dominion settler colonies experienced effective decolonization in the same era. This article expands the focus of research on decolonization to include environmentalism. The interpretation of the article also augments national environmental histories that have hitherto downplayed the influence of decolonization on the rise of environmentalism. Putting decolonization into the history of the rise of environmental thought and action sheds light as to why people in contemporary Australia and South Africa are so passionate about protecting indigenous nature and worried about threats posed by non-native invasive species.

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Whether a species is considered to be “indigenous” to a place or “native” to the nation has significant legal, cultural and ecological ramifications in many post-colonial settler societies. Efforts to maintain, restore and celebrate indigenous species and ecosystems are particularly intense in Australia and South Africa, two countries that have high rates of biodiversity and endemism, deep histories of human engagement and influence with nature and a modern history shaped by settler colonialism and globalization.<sup>1</sup> People in these two countries tend to express heightened concerns about the impact of non-native species on indigenous natures.<sup>2</sup> In both countries, the term indigenous can also have a special meaning that acknowledges cultural and ecological relationships between indigenous peoples and nature. As a result of these cultural and ecological linkages, the celebration of indigenous natures is used now as a means to build “a-political” national identities that connect migrants with indigenous peoples and fosters a sense of national purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Scholars have traced the development of cultural and scientific ideas of biotic nativeness in Australia and South Africa back to the second half of the nineteenth century when gardening and colonial nationalist movements celebrating “native” species developed as part of a wider movements across the Anglophone world.<sup>4</sup> The most common use of the term “native” at the time described a species found within the geography of a country (e.g. found within the polity of Australia or South Africa), but the term was also sometimes used to describe a species found *in situ* in its original climatic and ecological niche, a usage more equivalent to how ecologists or environmentalists use it

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<sup>1</sup> There are a growing number of comparative studies tracing these trends. See Carruthers and Robin, “Taxonomic Imperialism;” Kull and Rangan, “Acacia Exchanges.” For biotic nativeness in Australia see Lesley, “Decentering 1788: Beyond Biotic Nativeness.”

<sup>2</sup> For South Africa see Bennett “Model Invasions”; Comaroff and Comaroff, “Naturing the Nation.”

<sup>3</sup> New Zealand, which is not discussed in this article, is perhaps the country where this matters the most, see Ginn, “Extension, subversion, containment.”

<sup>4</sup> For more general discussions see Dunlap, *Nature and the English Disapora*. For the Cape in South Africa see, Van Sittert, “Making the Cape Floral Kingdom.” For Australia see Holmes, Martin and Mirmohamadi, *Reading the Garden*.

today. The term indigenous gained an important place-based ecological dimension in the 1960s when ecologists and gardeners began to more frequently distinguish between an indigenous species, which was seen to come from a particular place, and a native species, a species found within the geography of the nation but not necessarily from a specific place. Australia's first regional indigenous garden was founded in Perth in 1965. South Africa created three new regional indigenous botanic gardens in the late 1960s as part of the creation of a national network of gardens representing the country's floras. The turn towards indigenous gardens reflected a growing private and public appreciation for the vast wealth of species and ecosystems found within each nation during the 1960s and 1970s. Scholars have attributed these changes to the rise of nationalism and the international growth of environmentalism.<sup>5</sup>

Existing historical explanations have said almost nothing about how the decline of the British Empire and Commonwealth in the 1960s influenced popular and government attitudes towards nature.<sup>6</sup> As part of wider efforts to rethink the global history of decolonization, this article argues that decolonization reinforced and intensified nationalism, environmentalism and indigenous rights in ways that led people in both countries to place a stronger emphasis on celebrating and conserving indigenous natures. This article traces how the rising popularity of native and indigenous gardening can be linked to the unfolding of the Commonwealth and the demise of ethnic British identities in the 1960s and early 1970s, a process that Jim Davidson has usefully described as "de-dominionization."<sup>7</sup> Decolonization encouraged, even compelled, English-speakers with British ancestry living in the former dominions to abandon older imperial allegiances and symbols in favor of new ones rooted in national geographies and experiences. One result of this shift was that people in both countries gave up an older cosmopolitan colonial natural value system and adopted more assertive ecological values emphasizing the conservation of indigenous natures and their symbolic cultivation in public and private gardens.<sup>8</sup> The interpretation advanced here adds to a growing body of historical research that indicates that Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Canada all experienced effective decolonization during the 1960s and 1970s rather than at an earlier period, a view that since the 1960s has dominated national and imperial historiographies.<sup>9</sup> This article introduces ideas from the history of decolonization into environmental history, and vice versa, in order to create a more complete understanding of how decolonization shaped the politics, cultures and societies of the former dominions.

South Africa's longer history of colonial rule, which only ended in 1994, has meant that his-

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<sup>5</sup> See specific discussions of Australia and South Africa below.

<sup>6</sup> A few scholars have recognized that British identities lingered into the 1950s and even 1960s but have not assessed it in further detail. See Robin, *How a Continent Created a Nation*, 64-72, for discussion on how wool satisfied various longings for Britain and Australian identities in the 1950s and 1960s. Jamie Belich briefly mentions decolonization in the context of New Zealand's nascent environmentalism, but he does not analyze it in depth. See Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 528-530. Decolonization is almost never mentioned let alone analyzed in histories of environmental thought. Even leading imperial environmental historians tend to overlook this when talking about the period. See discussion of decolonization by Grove and Damadoran, "The Environmental," 25-7. The term decolonization is sometimes used in post-colonial theory, but post-colonial readings usually fail to distinguish between the processes of decolonization, either as a political or ideological movement, within a historical context. As a result the term is more often used to make distinctions between "Western" and "post-colonial" or "decolonized" knowledge systems. For one such conflation see Mastnak et. al., "Botanical decolonization." It may not be possible to use a common language across all disciplines, but at least in history, the term should be applied more specifically to the era of decolonization in order for accuracy.

<sup>7</sup> For the term "de-dominionization" see Davidson, "The De-dominionisation of Australia;" *idem*, "De-Dominionisation Revisited." The point should not be lost that most gardens fulfilled a variety of functions, with food production being the most important for most people in each different period. For food production see, Gaynor, *Harvest of the Suburbs*. Food production has a central place in the history of the Cape. See Pooley, "Jan van Riebeeck as Pioneering Explorer," 5. The Company Gardens in Cape Town focused primarily on economic botany and food production, though the gardens influenced conservation thinking in the Cape and throughout the wider tropical colonial world.

<sup>8</sup> See Bennett, "Margret Levyns and The Decline of Ecological Liberalism."

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 22.

torians have long overlooked the implications of the country's ejection from the British Commonwealth in 1961. Historians of South Africa place less emphasis on international linkages to explain the rise of native gardening and environmentalism and instead pay more attention to the longer process of colonial conservation and settler place-making, a theme that has also received attention in the Australian context.<sup>10</sup> There is no denying the importance of earlier conservation and settler colonial traditions, but the implications of officially leaving the British Empire in 1961 had long-lasting ramifications shaping how the national government and white population in South Africa engaged with nature in its political, cultural and scientific aspects. In this interpretation, South African communities used gardening for diverse purposes such as building a pan-white nationalism, maintaining a sense of Britishness, and interacting with the international gardening and environmental communities in spite of growing international pressure and later sanctions. South Africa was removed from pan-African scientific projects as early as 1962.<sup>11</sup>

Decolonization was equally important in Australia, a country wrestling with questions of indigenous rights, nationalism and an emerging ecological mindset. Libby Robin argues that a distinct "ecological consciousness" emerged in Australia from the late 1960s to 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Australian ecological consciousness corresponded to a growing attachment to the country's ecosystems, including ecosystems like remote deserts that had little utilitarian value and few of the aesthetics associated with the earliest national parks. A surge of nationalism is also recognized for playing a key role in shaping the increased place-based attachment to the country's species and landscapes.<sup>13</sup> Rising enthusiasm for native gardening was an important expression of the stronger link between nation and nature.<sup>14</sup> Ruth Morgan writes, "The increased enthusiasm for native plants may also be seen as a sign of Australia's burgeoning national confidence in the 1970s and the emergence of a broader environmentalism, perhaps even a sign of respect for the *genius loci* (or the spirit of the place)."<sup>15</sup> Growing interest in indigenous plants was at least indirectly influenced by indigenous rights, which emphasized the deep link between the Aboriginal Australian culture and the country's ecosystems and landscapes. Since the 1970s, many environmentalists have *imagined* that the objectives of environmentalism aligned with Aboriginal empowerment, even though in reality Aboriginals have held diverse, nuanced and oftentimes opposing views on the question of development or environmental protection.<sup>16</sup> Nationalism, environmentalism and indigenous rights were all bolstered by decolonization, a process that encouraged many people to downplay or to cut off British culture and connections.

The emergence of indigenous gardening and the strengthening of native gardening, though influenced by political and cultural trends, were underpinned to a considerable degree by the biogeographic and climatic conditions of both countries. Both countries have a striking floristic abundance and high degrees of endemism based on unique long-term evolutionary conditions. The ability of people to utilize this wealth of plants is shaped by the prevalence of summer heat, aridity and lack of water in many parts of both countries where the majority of people live. That the majority of white Australians and South African live in climates where people can plant iconic native cultivars—such as the flowers from the genus *Protea* in South Africa and the Kangaroo Paw flowers from the genus

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<sup>10</sup> There is a large literature on this that is outside of the scope of this paper. Relevant works cited elsewhere in this article include Foster, *Washed in Sun*; Pooley, *Burning Table Mountain*; Van Sittert, "Making the Cape Floral Kingdom;" Carruthers, "From 'Land' to 'Place': Landscape Conservation and Environmental Activism in the Magaliesberg, South Africa, and Cooper's Creek, Australia;" Bennett, "Margaret Levyns and the Decline of Ecological Liberalism." For Australia garden history see Holmes, Martin and Mirmohamadi, *Reading the Garden*.

<sup>11</sup> Van Wilgen *et. al.*, "Ecological Research and Conservation in the Cape Floristic Region," 18

<sup>12</sup> Robin, *Defending The Little Desert*.

<sup>13</sup> See for instance, Carruthers, "From 'Land' to 'Place': Landscape Conservation and Environmental Activism in the Magaliesberg, South Africa, and Cooper's Creek, Australia"; Robin, *How a Continent Created a Nation*.

<sup>14</sup> See Holmes, Martin and Mirmohamadi, *Reading the Garden*, part two.

<sup>15</sup> Morgan, *Running Out?*, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Rowse, *After Mabo*, 112.

*Anigozanthos* in Australia—goes some ways towards explaining the popularity of native gardening and the development of a relatively coherent national ecological consciousness throughout the country, something that was never achieved in the same way in the United States given its vast geography and strikingly different climates. Pockets of the USA—California, southern Arizona, and central Texas—developed indigenous and native gardening trends, but the striking floristic and climatic diversity throughout the vast USA meant a similar national consciousness based on similar plants was less feasible.

Climate influenced native and indigenous gardening but was not the determining factor driving these trends. Water restrictions in the droughts of the late 1970s changed what people in Perth, Western Australia, could plant.<sup>17</sup> It should be pointed out that this shift was possible in many respects because of the creation of the Perth Botanic Garden in 1965, which offered over 1,000 regional plant species to the public. Without easily available and cultivatable plants, regular gardeners would have been unable to make changes. In South Africa, drought in the early 1980s led to similar changes in gardening practice. Efforts by the National Botanic Garden to breed and distribute native and indigenous plants meant that by the early 1980s people had could procure cultivars required to make a more successful switch to native or indigenous gardening. Climatic determinants may also help explain why certain moist-tropical regions lagged behind in the public and private uptake of native gardening. Tropical climates had their own distinct styles of gardening. The warm, wet conditions in the moist-tropics and sub-tropics allowed for the adoption of water-intensive gardens influenced by international styles, Brazil modernism in coastal Natal and Balinese in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland. The popularity of exotic tropical garden does not negate the ideological and political dimensions of this argument. In fact, during the past decades indigenous gardening has gained considerable popularity in the tropics, a development that indicates how notions of native and indigenous gardening trends are shaped by ideology and culture as much or more than by climate or available local flora.

Before continuing, it is necessary to define the terms native and indigenous as they are used in this rest of the article. For the sake of common usage, this paper uses indigenous to refer to a plant that comes from a specific place or region whereas native refers to a plant that comes from within the geographic boundaries of the nation. The differences between native and indigenous, though useful in many ways, must not be applied too rigidly when historically analyzing gardening or conservation. Many people—then as now—used the terms native and indigenous simultaneously. Yet there were many people who thought about the differences between the two terms as a result of 1960s ecological thinking. An ecologists defines a species is indigenous only if it is found within the ecological conditions and geographic range in which it has become distributed naturally, either without human or with some human action. In gardening, relying on strict indigenous flora is usually impossible or not desirable, so most indigenous gardens *attempted* to recreate natural vegetation patterns or to highlight regional flora even if the example was collected 500 km away. The Perth Botanic Garden is an example of such an indigenous gardens because it attempted to reflect the indigenous flora of the biogeographic region. A native plant usually refers to a plant found within the boundaries of a nation-state that are used or planted for symbolic purposes rather than to reconstruct an indigenous ecosystem. The Canberra Botanic Gardens was founded as a native botanic garden because it included a greater variety of flora than found in the surrounding Australian Capital Territory.

### *Decolonization in the Dominions*

Historians have long underemphasized the importance of decolonization in the former dominions. South African historiography tends to relegate the country's ejection from the Commonwealth in

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<sup>17</sup> Morgan, ““Fear the Hose.””

1961 as just another step towards apartheid. The process of decolonization happened less obviously and more gradually in Australia, Canada and New Zealand where it was more difficult to date when decolonization began or ended. Historians once assumed that Australia, New Zealand and Canada were already independent by the 1960s as a result of the constitutional powers granted by the *Statute of Westminster* of 1931, which in principle allowed for effective political independence.<sup>18</sup> This viewpoint was reinforced by the emergence of national history in the dominions in the 1960s.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, imperial history became a subfield that languished from the 1970s until its revival in the late 1990s.<sup>20</sup> All of these trends led few people to investigate the lingering influence of imperialism or the changes caused by decolonization in periods as late as the 1960s and 1970s.

Recent scholarship on decolonization as it related to the dominions challenges the view that decolonization did not matter in the dominions. Stuart Ward and others argue that elites and large segments of the populous in Australia maintained loyalty and affinity with Britain well into the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> Scholars recognize that the Commonwealth remained a formidable, potent institution well into the late 1950s; its sudden demise in the 1960s, the great era of decolonization, caught many people in the dominions off-guard. A.G. Hopkins has argued persuasively that decolonization led to a similar set of changes in both the settler societies and formal colonies during the same eras. Australia, Canada and New Zealand ended racial restrictions, incorporated indigenous peoples into politics and civil life and constructed new national identities in the 1960s and 1970s. Hopkins writes: “the propagation and implementation of principles of human and civil rights undercut systems of domination based on claimed ethnic superiority; profound changes to the world economy reduced the value of colonial forms of integration and created new alignments; principles of civic nationality were adopted to meet the needs of an increasingly cosmopolitan world.”<sup>22</sup> Decolonization influenced the dominions in ways similar to newly independent formal colonies in Africa and Asia.

The Commonwealth and Britain’s relationships with the dominions irrevocably changed in the 1960s. It is necessary to outline the key events that constituted the decolonization of Australia and South Africa. The white minority in South Africa voted in 1960 to become a Republic, which became effective on the 31st of May 1961. Leading Afrikaner Nationalists were open to staying within the Commonwealth but the multi-racial Commonwealth required South Africa to reapply to the Commonwealth at an Extraordinary Commonwealth meeting in London. South Africa’s Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd recognized that the nations of the Commonwealth would not grant this application unless South Africa repealed its racial restrictions, something he was unwilling to consider. Verwoerd thus withdrew South Africa’s application to stay within the Commonwealth, a decision that forever changing South Africa’s relationship with Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

After 1961, Britain moved away from the Commonwealth preference system and the dominion ideal towards a model emphasizing European integration. Britain applied for the first time to join the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1961, only to be vetoed in 1963 by the French president Charles De Gaulle. Britain continued to push for EEC membership, finally acquiring it in 1973. The UK’s *Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962* discontinued the right of Commonwealth residents to migrate to Britain. The economics of preferential trade, challenged by the United States at the end of the Second World War, unwound rapidly as a result of Britain’s desire to join the EEC. The growth of the USA and Japan as importers, and America’s global military dominance, meant that Britain

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<sup>18</sup> Hopkins, “Rethinking Decolonization,” 213-215.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>20</sup> Peers, “Is Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again?”

<sup>21</sup> This is by no means an exhaustive list, but key inspiration in this article is drawn from Hopkins, “Rethinking Decolonization;” Curran and Ward, *The Unknown Nation*; Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*; Ward, “The Winds of Change in the British World;” Meaney, “Britishness and Australian identity;” Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*. This work is informed by the wider development of decolonization as a field of historical inquiry by scholars such as Wm. Roger Louis, John Darwin and Ronald Hyam.

<sup>22</sup> Hopkins, “Rethinking Decolonization,” 216.

mattered less to its former empire, and its former empire mattered less to Britain. The devaluation of Sterling in 1967 dealt a blow to Britain's economic prestige. The Harold Wilson government announced in 1968 that it would be abandoning its military outputs east of the Suez Canal in 1971, a decision that signaled the end of British cooperative defense in Asia-Pacific.

Changes to Australian identity were less traumatic than in South Africa because Australia did not actually leave the Commonwealth or face international isolation, but decolonization was in many respects more transformative to Australian identity because the decline of the white Australia ideal, which was underpinned by the imperial link, required a refashioning of identity. James Curran and Stuart Ward argue that, "the ferment about refashioning the national image from the early 1960s to the 1980s represented not so much the stirring of a more 'authentically' Australian nationalism as a response to the relatively sudden collapse of Britishness as a credible totem of civic and sentimental allegiance in Australia."<sup>23</sup> A new nationalism was required because Australia was losing its British connection, embracing its Aboriginal inhabitants and forging new economic and diplomatic connections with Asia. The *Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967* granted Aboriginal full voting rights, making them full citizens of the nation. Australians, unlike the majority of white South Africans, accepted racial pluralism and started the task of integrating Aborigines within the society, culture, politics and economy of the nation.

South Africa also experienced de-domionization though it did not follow the same path as the other dominions because of its decision to maintain white minority rule in the face of international protest. Most South African histories downplay the importance of South Africa leaving the Commonwealth because the end of apartheid and the empowerment of non-white voters in 1994 is viewed as the *real* act of decolonization.<sup>24</sup> Yet research on British communities in South Africa shows that break away from British influence profoundly reshaped the identity of people of British ancestry.<sup>25</sup> Leaving the Commonwealth was traumatic for many English-speakers, especially those who previously supported liberal political institutions, such as the franchise in the Cape. Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw note that among English speakers, "the more significant transition of South African attitudes [towards Britain and the South African nation] took place after 1960, not before."<sup>26</sup> English-speaking residents, despite being unhappy about the severance of British linkages, also experienced a nationalistic turn shaped by the country's international isolation and purposeful construction of a pan-white South African identity in order to maintain a united front on white minority rule.<sup>27</sup> Many white South Africans wanted decolonization. Some imagined that the environment could be a means of connecting together the country's various ethnicities, but this idea had to wait until the end of apartheid to be expressed fully.

### *Embracing the Indigenous: From Colonial Nationalism to Post-Colonial Nationalism*

Environmentalism in Australia and South Africa emerged at the same time when both countries cultivated stronger national identities in the wake of the demise of the imperial ideal. Embracing the environment filled an identity vacuum and allowed for the expression of new values that were imagined to be refreshingly different from those of the earlier colonial conservation era. The identification with "the environment," both in the abstract and through place-based experiences, became a powerful

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<sup>23</sup> Curran and Ward, *The Unknown Nation*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> See Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994*, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Lambert, "An identity threatened"; *idem*, "Maintaining a British Way of Life"; *idem*, "Tell England, ye who pass this monument"; *idem*, "An Unknown People". For the wider concept of "Britishness" in South Africa see Dubow, "How British Was the British World?" Also see Hyam and Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok*.

<sup>26</sup> Hyam and Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok*, 306.

<sup>27</sup> See Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994*, 85.

motivator for social action in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>28</sup> Jane Carruthers argues that in Australia and South Africa more generic notions of “land” were transformed into stronger senses of “place” that fuelled the passion for environmental activism during this period.<sup>29</sup> Many people (especially in Australia) went one step further by imagining that the protection and celebration of indigenous environments somehow atoned for earlier exploitive practices against nature and indigenous peoples. This idea often reinforced the longstanding, somewhat problematic view that indigenous peoples are inherently closer to nature, but it nonetheless represented a major turning point in the embrace of non-European aesthetics, values and politics.

Connections between nature and nation had of course been made before the 1960s, but the political implications of these links had consistently been downplayed because of the supremacy of imperial ties. The construction of distinct colonial nationalisms before the 1960s did not challenge the ethnic underpinning of empire because each variant of nationalism was understood as a distinct expression of Britishness. Keith Hancock, when commenting on British identity in the 1930s, noted famously that, “pride of race counted for more than love of country,” a concept that Hopkins notes can be applied to the other dominions.<sup>30</sup> The southern hemisphere settler colonies had always shown stronger interest in using nature for symbolizing the nation. Thomas Dunlap argues that the use of nature for the purposes of fashioning national identity was “particularly apparent in Australia and New Zealand” during the late nineteenth century because both colonies lacked potent political or military traditions.<sup>31</sup> Dunlap, who did not study South Africa, could have noted that in South Africa, white Britons and moderate Afrikaners jointly celebrated nature in order to avoid military and political history because of lingering antagonism from two Anglo-Boer Wars and the British conquest of South Africa.<sup>32</sup>

The cosmopolitanism of the imperial British community produced an ecological outlook I describe elsewhere as ecological liberalism.<sup>33</sup> Ecological liberalism reflected in nature the political, social and economic values that underpinned much of Britain’s “liberal” empire. The fundamental political principle of liberalism was that an action was acceptable so long as it did not interfere with the property rights of others. In a similar manner, scientists and non-scientists believed that species—exotic and native—should be tolerated so long as they did not unduly dominate other species in a negative way (such as a weed with negative impacts). Just as a neighborhood could become denser with people without upsetting the balance, so too could nature handle new additions without causing ecological problems. Botanists and early ecologists posited that nature was in equilibrium so long as humans did not fundamentally disturb it so they had few concerns about rampant invasions.<sup>34</sup> The concept of ecological liberalism explains, for instance, why leading botanists could both advocate large-scale species introductions while at the same time calling for flora reserves to protect indigenous and native species without seeing both efforts as contradictory.

Ecological liberalism crumbled under the weight of new scientific and popular beliefs about environmental conservation. Older values that gave equal or greater preference to “useful,” often exotic, species broke down in the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, new cultural and scientific revaluations of biotic nativeness privileged species or ecosystems that were deemed to be indigenous to a locale or native to a nation. The size and number of protected areas expanded exponentially

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<sup>28</sup> Robin, “Biodiversity as a Political Force,” 50. The creation of the idea of “environmental sciences” in the 1950s served as a critical scientific precursor to this wider social change.

<sup>29</sup> Carruthers, “From ‘Land’ to ‘Place’: Landscape Conservation and Environmental Activism in the Magaliesberg, South Africa, and Cooper’s Creek, Australia.”

<sup>30</sup> Hancock, *Australia*, 49; Cited from Hopkins, “Rethinking Decolonization,” 218.

<sup>31</sup> Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*, 98.

<sup>32</sup> See in particular Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*.

<sup>33</sup> See Bennett, “Margret Levyns and The Decline of Ecological Liberalism” for the concept.

<sup>34</sup> Pooley, “Pressed Flowers,” 606; Bennett, “Margaret Levyns and the Decline of Ecological Liberalism,” 77.

during this period. Another consequence of this shift was the increasing use of native/indigenous species in public and private gardens. Growing native and indigenous plants symbolized a new national pride and identity rooted in local rather than imperial experiences. Changing conceptions of invasive species from the 1940s to 1960s demonstrated to scientists that exotic species posed a dangerous risk to the survival of rare species and fragile ecosystems.<sup>35</sup> These changes occurred concomitant to each other. Increased celebrations fuelled greater concerns about introduced species, and vice versa.

### *Native and Indigenous Gardening: Comparative Trends*

The 1960s and 1970s saw a fundamental reevaluation of the beauty and importance of native and indigenous species in gardening that overturned an older colonial value system. During the earliest era of colonial settlement, indigenous plants had received a subordinate status to supposedly more “aristocratic” exotics, such as roses or dahlias.<sup>36</sup> Yet there were always people, even from the earliest era of settlement, who had an interest in the local flora.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, botanists and local residents experimented with native species and started to express an aesthetic affinity for select native species. The emergence of colonial nationalism in the 1890s gave plants a new symbolic importance that was quickly seized by governments and civic-minded colonial residents. One can trace a steady growth of interest in the planting of natives to corresponding bursts of colonial nationalism in the 1890s, and then again in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>38</sup>

Interest in native gardening grew after World War II as a result of newfound national pride stemming from participation in the war effort, the expansion of suburbs that required new gardens and landscaping, and as a progressive development of older colonial gardening trends that celebrated iconic natives. Yet it is instructive to note how different gardening in the 1950s was compared to the 1960s. Governments and the public did not seek to fully capitalize on the symbolic potential of native gardens (let alone indigenous gardens, which were almost not on the radar) for the cultivation of nationalism. Gardens composed of native species from throughout each country were just as often seen as a novelty to be “pointed out and remarked upon as ‘something different’” rather than viewed as a bold assertion of national identity.<sup>39</sup> Australian states created the first native and indigenous botanic gardens in the 1960s, and South Africa’s Republican government allowed for the establishment of a national network of regional indigenous botanic gardens.

The muted use of gardening for expressing nationalism can be explained partly by the fact that the Commonwealth had revived in the 1950s after World War II and the southern hemisphere dominions tried to maintain or even grow new bonds based on their common kinship, something the South African writer Conrad Lighton in 1951 described as being “Sisters of the South.” A number of prominent native gardening advocates continued to imagine national developments as just one part of a larger world of gardening throughout the British Commonwealth. Gardeners continue to share their knowledge of native plants with gardeners in the other colonies. Readers of Blombery’s *Native Australian Plants* (1959) were informed in the preface that the book would “provide reliable guidance for everyone in the more closely settled areas of temperate Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand.”<sup>40</sup> After leaving Commonwealth in 1961, South Africans continued to refer to Australia and

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<sup>35</sup> For South Africa see Bennett, “Model Invasions”; *idem*, “Margaret Levyns and the Decline of Ecological Liberalism.” For Australia see, Mulligan and Hill, *Ecological Pioneers*, 208.

<sup>36</sup> Holmes et. al., *Reading the Garden*, 102; Forsyth, *Remembering Gardens*, 247.

<sup>37</sup> Pooley, “Jan van Riebeeck as Pioneering Explorer,” 17-19.

<sup>38</sup> Ginn, “Extension, Subversion, Containment”, 347; Foster, *Washed with Sun*, 168; Daweson, *A History of Gardening in New Zealand*, 275; Helmreich, *The English Garden and National Identity* describes these trends as they relate to Britain until 1914.

<sup>39</sup> Brooks, *Australian Native Plants*, xiii.

<sup>40</sup> Blombery, *Native Australian Plants*, v.



other parts of the empire in an attempt to maintain connections amidst growing international isolation, but Australian references to South Africa declined owing to South Africa's leaving of the Commonwealth and the growing distance between the two countries. Leighton's "Sisters of the South" ideal, which was always more inspiring to white South Africans than Australians, had reached its best sell-by date in mid-1961, especially for a younger generations of Australians who championed indigenous rights and judged South African whites harshly for their policies.

In the 1960s, gardening theory and practice in Australia and South Africa changed significantly in response to the combined influence of decolonization, nationalism, environmentalism and indigenous rights (in Australia). The decades saw the foundation of the modern indigenous gardening. Indigenous gardening advanced the native gardening framework, which saw the planting of national plants as reflecting cultural values and promoting aesthetic sensibilities, to include a wider *ecological* notion emphasizing the proper "place" of a plant in its region or climate. Achieving this ecological idea proved almost impossible for the average gardener, but it became the overarching idea behind almost every government garden created in the 1960s. Governments had the resources and desire to seize fully on the symbolic value of native and indigenous gardens. Australian and South African governments put more effort into creating native and indigenous botanic gardens than probably any other comparable government in the world during this period. The growth of environmentalism and ecological consciousness alone cannot explain why governments put so much effort into establishing public gardens devoted to indigenous and native plants. There was no corresponding creation of large state-funded indigenous and native botanic gardens in other biologically diverse regions that did not experience decolonization. California's most influential gardens were established privately and at universities and state schools. Only New Zealand, a settler colony that underwent decolonization, experienced a similar trend to Australia and South Africa.

Private gardeners followed along with state trends as much as they could. Native gardening rose to new heights and a handful of advocates called for the first truly indigenous gardens. Only the wealthiest or most connected gardeners could design truly native or indigenous gardens. The majority of private gardeners, if they grew natives or indigenous plants, cultivated them alongside exotic varieties. R.T.M. Prescott in *Gardening for Australia* (1971) commented that, "[the] blending of these plants [natives] with the more exotic introduced types is becoming an accepted feature of modern home gardening. It should be emphasized that some such combination, not definable in mathematical terms, will in the future be known as the 'Australian style of gardening.'"<sup>41</sup> The importance of mixing natives with exotics should not be seen as a movement *against* native or indigenous gardening. Mixed gardening offered a halfway house allowing people to maintain the hardy and attractive cultivars that had been selected and bred for local conditions. The sheer difficulty of making native or indigenous gardens was only overcome somewhat after decades of selection, breeding and experimentation.

Gardening shaped and was shaped by environmentalism. Indigenous gardening, especially public botanic gardens, became a tool in the protection of nature. Botanical gardens changed from being sites where plants were classified and experimented on to being places that sought to help with the conservation of *in situ* species and ecosystems. Visitors learned about conservation efforts. Visitor proceeds and government monies funded research on rare and endangered species. In this way, the garden was a site of research and education. Gardening advocates also drew links between private gardens and wider conservation initiatives. Hans Borman and David Hardy emphasized the link between gardening and conservation in *Aloes of the South African Veld* (1971): "Cultivate your aloes by all means, and care for them, but above all protect in the area where nature has created them."<sup>42</sup> Traditional accounts of environmentalism that overlook the role of gardening miss a key component of why middle class attitudes changed. Many people expressed quiet support for nature conserving

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<sup>41</sup> Prescott, *Gardening in Australia*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Borman and Hardy, *Aloes of the South African Veld*, x.

in their gardening. These are the subtle, ground-up changes that are rarely captured in studies of protest movements but evidence broader changes in attitudes.

### *South Africa*

Harold Rycroft, Director of the National Botanic Gardens, wrote in 1968 that, “Particularly during the last decade or so people in my country have been taking an increasing interest in the cultivation and preservation of the native flora.”<sup>43</sup> The 1960s saw the expansion of the South African National Botanical Gardens into a national indigenous garden network. The expansion of botanic gardens brought the celebration and conservation of the nation’s indigenous vegetation to the attention of large swaths of the white population who had not previously had direct engagements with the country’s key indigenous and native botanical institutions. The National Botanic Garden’s almost exclusive focus on South Africa’s national flora was recognized internationally in the 1960s for its vision and uniqueness.<sup>44</sup> This development built on earlier efforts, including the creation of the world’s first major native botanic garden at Kirstenbosch in 1913, but fundamentally transformed gardening by emphasizing the indigenous vegetation of the *entire* nation rather than focusing primarily on the southwest Cape or the major cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria.

European interest in South Africa’s flora began from the beginnings of colonization in the 1650s, but native flora preservation only became a recognizable social movement in the Cape in the last decades of the 1800s. Concern about the fate of the Cape Flora and celebrations of its uniqueness and beauty led to the establishment of the National Botanic Garden at Kirstenbosch on the slopes of Table Mountain in Cape Town in 1913. Kirstenbosch was originally designated to emphasize the flora from the entire nation, and only later in the century gradually evolved into garden with an indigenous focus on the Cape Flora (now known as Cape Floristic Region), something that only finally crystallized in the 1960s. Kirstenbosch was the first of a series of number of native botanic gardens created elsewhere in the country. Gwendolen Edwards founded Roedean School’s famous native botanic garden and indigenous koppie (hilltop) in 1917 after a visit to Kirstenbosch. She proved influential in lobbying the government of the city of Johannesburg to establish the native garden The Wilds in 1938 across the street on donated land.<sup>45</sup> Stellenbosch University founded its famous succulent garden in the 1920s.<sup>46</sup> The Botanic Research Institute started the Pretoria Botanic Gardens on Silverton Ridge in 1946 and officially opened it in 1958. Botanical gardens had long served a symbolic and scientific purpose in South Africa, but meager funding and the perceived (as well as somewhat real) division between taxonomically inclined Kirstenbosch botanists and the Botanical Research Institute and National Herbarium in Pretoria meant that there was little central coordination.

A wider national awareness of native and ingenious plants developed in the early 1960s. The NBG’s budget was increased as a result of a government investigation into the funding at state-aided institutions in 1961-2. The Republic could continue to maintain funding across a wider NBG network because of South Africa’s buoyant export-oriented minerals economy in the 1960s and 1970s. This steady stream of funding allowed South African government to push forward on new initiatives in a way that not possible during the sanctions of the 1980s. In 1963, two years after leaving the Commonwealth, the National Botanic Gardens and the Botanical Society of South Africa sponsored a national Golden Jubilee celebration for the 50-year anniversary of the Kirstenbosch gardens that involved tours, shows and the appointment of patron politicians. Rycroft used the Jubilee to advocate

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<sup>43</sup> Rycroft, “Horticulture of Indigenous Plants in South Africa,” 19.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Foster, *Washed in Sun*, 170-176.

<sup>46</sup> For Stellenbosch see Tijmens, “Hortulanus (Kurator) H. Herre en die Botaniese Tuin van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch.”

for a national system of indigenous botanic gardens to study and conserve the country's highly diverse floras, an idea that had been proposed in 1911 by Harold Pearson but found little traction because "the first 50 years in the gardens was an intense financial struggle" given limited government support.<sup>47</sup>

The expansion of the National Botanic Gardens from 1967 was something that English and Afrikaans-speaking liberals, moderates and nationalists could all agree on. Rycroft emphasized a pan-white gardening history by emphasizing that the foundation of "white civilization in South Africa" can be traced back to the Dutch East India's Company Gardens, a line frequently used by his two predecessors.<sup>48</sup> The uniting of white gardening histories together into a single narrative echoed a longer tradition of "South Africanization" stemming from Union that sought to bridge Briton and Boer. The break away from Commonwealth isolated the English speaking communities, who required Afrikaner support to run government institutions, such as the National Botanic Garden. Subtle shifts indicate a changing tenor and emphasis. For instance, the *Journal of The Botanical Society of South Africa*, long an English bastion promoting the Cape, decided in 1963-4 to start printing its title page in English and Afrikaans as well as to publish the "news and notes" in dual English and Afrikaans. The original British-influenced arts and crafts cover design, used since its first publication 1915, was replaced by a plain looking cover before changing later to a picture cover design.

Rycroft's great achievement of the 1960s was to expand the National Botanic Gardens beyond the Cape. Members of the Botanical Society celebrated the expansion of the National Botanical Gardens in 1967, describing it as the "year we first enlarged our borders outside the Cape Province."<sup>49</sup> The gardens were located in the Orange Free State and Transvaal in Afrikaner regional cities: the Orange Free State Botanic Garden in Bloemfontein (1967), the Drakensberg and Eastern Free State Botanic Garden in Harrismith (1967), the Lowveld Garden in Nelspruit (1969), and Roodeport north of Johannesburg (1982). The expansion also saw the NBG take over the longstanding botanical gardens in English-dominated Pietermaritzburg, a move that meant that the network covered most of the country's major climates and biomes. The expansion of the gardens was made possible by Rycroft and Kirstenbosch's networks. In Nelspruit, the English-speaking Hall family dynasty donated the land along the Crocodile River to create the garden. A leading indigenous garden advocate in Bloemfontein, Professor E.M. van Zinderen Bakker, a person who was critical of apartheid. The motivations for supporting indigenous gardening varied because it appealed to people from a variety of political views and linguistic backgrounds. The Nationalist government recognized Rycroft for his efforts. Rycroft received the Decoration for Meritorious Service from the State President Marais Vioen in 1980 for his services expanding the gardening and popularising the South African flora overseas.

Without government support there would not be such high levels of interest in indigenous species nor such a strong uptake in native and indigenous gardening. The NBG led breeding efforts and distributed seeds to private companies as well as members of the Botanical Society.<sup>50</sup> Government-published books and magazines, such as *Latern*, extolled the beauty and scientific significance of South Africa's flora and the institutions devoted to studying it. The country's most famous flowers, such those from the genus *Protea*, received significant attention from government research agencies and private gardeners for their potential for domestic gardening, export, and also for its longstanding use as a national symbol.<sup>51</sup> Rycroft made the genus *Protea* the primary focus of his attention in the early 1960s. Proteas provided an entry-point into native gardening because growers were happy to plant such a large, attractive flower. In 1971, Una Van Der Spuy, author of *South African Shrubs*

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<sup>47</sup> Chapman, "Kirstenbosch on the Brink of a New Development," 27.

<sup>48</sup> Rycroft, "Horticulture of Indigenous Plants in South Africa," 19.

<sup>49</sup> "News and Notes," 11.

<sup>50</sup> Compton, *Kirstenbosch: Garden for a Nation*, 108.

<sup>51</sup> Middelman, *Proteas: The Birth of a Worldwide Industry*.

and *Trees for the Garden and Wild Flowers of South Africa for the Garden*, wrote, “[u]nfortunately...it is only within the past ten to twenty years that we have begun to grow indigenous plants in our gardens, and it is generally the larger plants such as proteas...whilst the smaller ones are still neglected.”<sup>52</sup> Initiatives by the National Botanic Gardens, the Agriculture Department, university researchers and private individuals focused on findings ways to breed and grow South African plants in a variety of conditions.<sup>53</sup>

The celebration and cultivation of indigenous plants helped some white South Africans to sustain international connections in the face of growing African and international isolation. Interest in the country’s flora opened up opportunities for many people to travel and maintain international connections. Sanctions set in gradually, so South Africans did not feel entirely cut off from Britain or large parts of the world, but international pressure on South Africa had been intensifying since Harold McMillan’s *Winds of Change* speech in 1960.<sup>54</sup> Less than a year after South Africa left the Commonwealth, Marie Vogt told an audience of South Africans horticulturalists about how she felt on a recent trip to Europe where scientists expressed considerable interest in the Cape’s flora and South Africa’s *Protea* breeding program: “It gave me some satisfaction that in this case the initiative [protea breeding] came from South Africa, since the proteas belong to us.”<sup>55</sup> Botanical Society members used the National Botanical Gardens and its network of gardeners to maintain international connections with other gardens and gardeners.<sup>56</sup> During the 1970s, Rycroft sent flowers “almost every week” to South Africa’s Embassy’s for display.<sup>57</sup> South Africa’s leading ecologists, botanists and other vegetation experts used their expertise and international interest in South Africa’s flora to attend foreign conferences and invite international visitors to the country even at the height of international sanctions in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>58</sup> The country’s flora, and the showcasing of it in gardens, both enabled a distinct sense of local place while keeping alive cherished connections to Britain, the dominions and the world.

## *Australia*

The 1960s saw a blossoming of interest in native gardening in Australia right when the country underwent significant political and social changes associated with the break away from Britain and the incorporation of Aboriginal Australians as full citizens. Native gardening advocates advocated new styles that sought to “genuinely” reflected Australian landscapes. Maloney and Walker’s seminal book *Designing Australian Gardens* (1966) marked a new era of native gardening by advancing the bush garden as an idea and practice. The bush garden sought to emulate certain aesthetics and ecologies of the Australian landscape.<sup>59</sup> The bush garden gained newfound political and cultural status at the same time when Australians sought to claim distinctly national styles in art, literature and design.<sup>60</sup> Many Australian gardeners saw the bush garden as symbol of an authentic national culture.

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<sup>52</sup> Van Der Spuy, *Wild Flowers of South Africa for the Garden*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Winter, “Some South African perennials for the garden,” 30-2.

<sup>54</sup> Van Wilgen *et. al.*, “Ecological Research and Conservation in the Cape Floristic Region,” 18

<sup>55</sup> Vogt, “The Cultivation of the Proteaceae,” p. 9

<sup>56</sup> There are many articles from *Journal of the Botanical Society of South Africa* in the period talking about the growing of South African plants overseas. The archive is free and searchable. See: [http://reference.sabinet.co.za/sa\\_epublication/veld](http://reference.sabinet.co.za/sa_epublication/veld).

<sup>57</sup> <http://abcjournal.org/index.php/ABC/article/viewFile/870/823>, accessed 1 Jan 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Pooley, *Burning Table Mountain*, 105.

<sup>59</sup> Dyson, “Rethinking Australian Natural gardens and national identity, 1950–1979.”

<sup>60</sup> This transition was felt gradually by many, but the transition from exotics to native is clear. See Holmes, *Between the Leaves*, 243-6.

Holmes *et al.* write that, “the bush garden was seen as a coming of age for Australian gardening; it was uniquely home-grown.”<sup>61</sup>

In the 1960s, state governments in Australia created the first native and first indigenous gardens. J.S Beard, the first director of the Perth Botanic Garden in Kings Park, noted, “Botanic Gardens dedicated to their local native flora are a new thing in Australia and this one in King’s Park is one of the only two so far, and the first to be officially opened. The other is in Canberra.”<sup>62</sup> The establishment of the Perth Botanic Garden in King’s Park in 1965 emphasized the state’s flora, especially plants from its highly diverse southwest region. 1,200 species from the state were displayed in the garden; an equal number of species could be purchased by nurseries and private growers from the garden.<sup>63</sup> In 1967, the Botanic Gardens of Canberra opened to the public; it officially opened in 1970. The Botanic Gardens of Canberra was proclaimed to “be the only large public gardens in eastern Australia entirely devoted to the native plants of Australia.”<sup>64</sup> John Wrigley served as the first the Curator of the Botanic Gardens of Canberra. He received his appointment based on his knowledge of native plants and his work in inspiring the Ku-rin-gai Wildflower Garden founded in 1967 at St. Ives outside of Sydney.<sup>65</sup> In 1971, the Canberra Botanic Garden (later the Australian National Botanic Garden) began publishing *Growing Native Plants* booklets to redress the lack of knowledge about native species.<sup>66</sup> The publication was discontinued in the mid-1980s because the Commonwealth government determined that there was enough information available for gardeners to grow natives.

Embracing native gardening opened up new opportunities for white Australians to appreciate non-European perspectives, a shift away from the longstanding preference for British and European culture. Some Anglo-Australians found inspiration in the “natural” gardens of East Asia, especially Japan and China. In the first volume of *Designing Australian Bush Gardens*, Walker and Maloney “acknowledge a debt to the Japanese, and their genius for creating natural gardens.”<sup>67</sup> Their perspective expanded the next year to include a strong reference to Aboriginal ideas as interpreted by European romanticization. The preface to their book *More About Bush Gardens* (1967) told readers, “Australia’s garden was born before the dreamtime, sea-framed and left to drift in loneliness, as pendulous guardian of the primeval.”<sup>68</sup> Walker and Maloney’s acknowledgement of the dreamtime and the continent’s deep history represented a clear break with British connections that firmly grounded white Australians within the time-line of Australian history. At the same time, by looking to deep time, Maloney and Walker ensured that Anglo Australians and other immigrants fit within the narrative of the nation. The implication of their logic was clear: indigenous nature preceded indigenous peoples, though over time the two became increasingly linked. Other white Australians tried to understand the essence of “indigenous landscapes.” In 1969, the architect Alistair Knox argued at the Australian Institute for Landscape Architects for “indigenous landscape” to be used in applied landscape design throughout the country.<sup>69</sup> This reflected the growth of interest in Aboriginal languages history, culture, anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>70</sup>

Horticultural challenges relating to the growing of plants delayed a greater proliferation of the native gardens, especially the bush garden. It proved challenging to overcome initial hurdles in terms

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<sup>61</sup> Holmes *et al.*, *Reading the Garden*, 193.

<sup>62</sup> Beard, “The Influence of Kirstenbosch in Australia,” 41-3.

<sup>63</sup> *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 693.

<sup>64</sup> “Opening of Gardens,” *Canberra Times* 14 March 1967, 6.

<sup>65</sup> See Oral History interview, <http://www.cpbr.gov.au/gardens/about/history/oral-history/wrigley-1995.html>, accessed 1 March 2016.

<sup>66</sup> The information is now available online. See <https://www.anbg.gov.au/gnp/>, accessed 10 Oct 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Maloney and Walker, *Designing Australian Bush Gardens*, 9.

<sup>68</sup> Cited from Dyson, “Rethinking Australian Natural Gardens,” 57.

<sup>69</sup> Dyson, “Rethinking Australian Natural Gardens,” 55.

<sup>70</sup> Bongiorno, “Fabian Socialism and British Australia,” 224-6.

of species selection, site location and techniques for maintaining native plants because much less breeding had been done and fewer efforts made to find suitable species and create instructions on how to tend them.<sup>71</sup> As a result, in Australia the growth in native plantings were as Trigger et. al note were, “limited to a relatively narrow range of showy and adaptable species, drawn from across the continent.”<sup>72</sup> Yet advances in selection, breeding and greater knowledge of methods over the following decades allowed Australians to grow a greater variety of native species in their gardens.

Though the bush garden had national appeal, it took on particular forms according to the climate, ecology, soil type, and availability of native plants in specific locales. Native gardening was particularly popular in parts of Perth, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. Regions with hot, dry summers proved to be the most ideal locations for native gardens. The bush garden movement reached its peak of popularity in the late 1960s and 1970s but declined in the 1980s as a result of the difficulty of maintaining “bush” styles. Its rise and subsequent decline paved the way for other native and indigenous gardening styles that appeared. Holmes *et al.* emphasize that, “the *idea* of the bush garden probably had more influence than did its reality.”<sup>73</sup> There were many places where the bush garden took longer to take off. Many gardeners in the higher-rainfall, cooler highland areas of Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales continued to emphasize traditional English styles.<sup>74</sup> Tropical regions in Australia were strongly influenced by the Indian Ocean, especially the Australian-Balinese styles developed by Michael White in the 1970s. Climatic and geographic determinants, such as more abundant water, meant that residents were not forced to rely on drought-prone varieties, which limited selection. It took a few decades longer for native gardening to gain a stronger foothold in tropical areas, but it has steadily gained popularity.

The creation of new suburbs helped to inculcate connectedness to indigenous and native plants and landscapes.<sup>75</sup> In inner city neighborhoods one can sharply distinguish between established suburbs with oaks, plane trees, pines and elms from those built in the late 1960s and 1970s, which are dominated by natives, especially eucalyptus.<sup>76</sup> Urban designers and architects increasingly used native or indigenous species for street trees and landscaping instead of planting exotics. Keeping iconic large trees was economical and provided immediate landscape presence. Native shrubs and trees were also perceived (often wrongly) to require low maintenance. Native trees, such as “bottlebrush” *Callistemon*, *Banksia* trees, and the lemon-scented gum *Corymbia citriodora* (planted especially in NSW and Sydney), had since at least the early twentieth century been favored for their flowers and smells, but this late 1960s and 1970s trend reflected an embrace of the “bush” aesthetic rather than focusing attention primarily to showy natives alongside established exotics.

During the 1970s, gardeners began to pay more attention to indigenous local and regional flora, a sign that indicated how ecological thinking had changed people’s minds about the symbolism and functionality of gardens. This thinking diverged from earlier native gardening trends by emphasizing indigenous species rather than drawing in plants from different climates or regions. In 1979, Western Australians Robert Powell, Jane Emberson, and Susan R. Tingay advocated that people create a truly indigenous garden: “How can you discover what garden plants are best suited to the natural conditions of your block?... The method has already been applied, over millions of years, by nature. The species that used to grow naturally on your block are ideally suited to its conditions.”<sup>77</sup> The reality of the indigenous garden proved far more challenging because a large percentage of indigenous plants cannot function in urban environments nor could many wild plants be raised in gardens. In

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<sup>71</sup> Webb, *Australian Native Plants: The King’s Park Experience*, ix.

<sup>72</sup> Trigger *et. al.*, “Ecological Restoration, Cultural Preferences,” 1276.

<sup>73</sup> Holmes *et. al.*, *Reading the Garden*, 193.

<sup>74</sup> Baskin and Dickson, *Australia’s Timeless Gardens*, 69.

<sup>75</sup> Cerwonka, *Native to the Nation*, 112-113.

<sup>76</sup> Baskin and Dickson, *Australia’s Timeless Gardens*, 69.

<sup>77</sup> Powell, Emberson, and Tingay, *The Self-Effacing Gardener*, 7.

reality, the closest people could come to indigenous gardening was to select plants from a larger regional flora. Indigenous gardening set an almost impossibly high benchmark for private gardeners, but it reflected a particularly apposite expression of indigenous gardening theory.

### *Conclusion*

The popularization of native and indigenous gardening in this period has had an enduring influence on the gardening practices and identity of people in both countries. A 2010 study of the gardening habits of Australians of British heritage found that over two-thirds, or 71%, of them planted native or indigenous species and “spoke positively of them.”<sup>78</sup> The same study noted that Vietnamese or Macedonian migrants showed less interest in planting natives for their symbolic or functional (e.g. attracting birds) values. These two immigrant groups have instead focused on planting fruits, vegetables and edible herbs. Interestingly, the same study shows that gardening preferences strongly correlate to ideas of national park management. This analysis agrees with the argument of this paper that gardening practices informed how gardeners viewed the protection of nature more generally.

There is no similar study of South African gardening preferences, but it is possible to infer from studies of attitudes towards exotic species as well as anecdotal experience that a roughly similar trend has occurred there among white English-speakers. Embracing the country’s natural heritage of plants is one way of symbolically claiming allegiance to the “new” South Africa. This is even happening in places like Durban that withheld from participating in indigenous and native gardening trends. Many new fenced housing estates in Durban are landscaped using indigenous and native species.<sup>79</sup> This confirms the thesis that climate alone cannot explain gardening trends although it nonetheless remains an important consideration in gardening selection to this day.

Contemporary indigenous and native gardening trends in Australia and South Africa were profoundly shaped (but by no means entirely caused) by the decolonization of both countries in the 1960s. The decline of the British Commonwealth as a meaningful political structure tying together the British world and the loss of shared kinship as an idea in the 1960s left a sizeable hole in the identity of many people of British ancestry in those countries. Australian and South Africans of British ancestry consciously embraced aspects of their countries that reflected a seemingly more authentic expression of nationalism rooted within national experience and geography rather than British imperial precedents or ethnic identity. They needed to look no further than nature. Indigenous nature, symbolized and cultivated in gardens, reflected the cultivation of a new nationhood that gave people ethical obligations, a sense of purpose, and the ability to feel a sense of connectedness and belonging to place.

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<sup>78</sup> Head, Muir, and Hamepl, “Australian Backyard Gardens and the Journey of Migration,” 337.

<sup>79</sup> Ballard and Jones, “Natural Neighbours,” 12.

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