

## SCOUTING FOR EUCALYPTUS PESTS ON THE CAPE PENINSULA

*Eucalyptus* spp. have been planted extensively in many parts of the Western Cape Province for hundreds of years. Most of these trees are found in gardens, on farmlands and at roadsides. In addition to providing shade (and in years past a source of timber), an important role of these trees is to provide forage (flowers) for bees. These bees provide crucial ecosystem services as pollinators of fruit trees that form the basis of one of South Africa's most valuable industries. There is growing evidence that many of these trees are declining due to repeated infestations of insect pests and fungal pathogens. This could threaten the future of the fruit industry.



In a first step towards understanding this problem, FABI's Prof. Mike Wingfield undertook a preliminary survey of *Eucalyptus* trees in the greater Stellenbosch area, assisted by Dr Mike Allsopp of the Agricultural Research Council, Plant Protection Research Institute. They encountered most of the major alien invasive pests affecting *Eucalyptus* forestry in South Africa as well as various leaf and shoot pathogens. These were associated with clear evidence of decline of trees, particularly *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. The plan is to undertake more intensive research towards understanding the problem and reducing the apparent threat to bee foraging and fruit tree health.