



STURT'S DESERT PEA

SUZANNE MEDWAY | PHOTOS BY KEN METCALFE

The Sturt's desert pea (*Swainsona formosa*) is a well-known Australian native flower that is the state floral emblem for South Australia.

Sturt's desert pea, genus *Swainsona*, is named after English botanist Isaac Swainson. The plant is famous for its distinctive blood-red leaf-like flowers, each with a bulbous black centre, or 'boss'. It is native to the arid regions of

central and north-western Australia, and its range extends into all mainland Australian states with the exception of Victoria.

The flower is referred to as the 'Flower of Blood' by some Koori groups. This title comes from the legend which tells of a young woman who escaped marriage to an elderly gentleman by eloping with her younger lover. The

shunned man and some of his friends tracked the couple down after some years and killed them both, as well as the relatives with whom they had lived. Sometime later, the old man returned to the place where he had slain the lovers and found the ground covered with the scarlet flowers that we know as the Sturt's desert pea.

