

Eucalyptus Discovery Tour

If time permits, a visit to the Eucalyptus Discovery Centre would be worthwhile prior to undertaking this walk. The Eucalyptus Discovery Centre is an interactive learning environment that showcases the genus Eucalyptus. The Centre is located in the main street of Coleraine (Whyte Street) and is open weekday mornings only or by appointment.

Allow a minimum of one (1) hour for this walk.

Of all the amazing plants that make up the unique Australian flora, Eucalyptus is arguably our most important genus. Found in environments ranging from rainforest edge to arid inland, from salt-drenched coast to alpine meadow, it represents the climax vegetation in all these ecological communities. Approximately 800 species and subspecies are known to exist - more than 500 can be seen at the Arboretum.

Man has always found the 'gum' tree to be useful; for shade and shelter; for timber, honey and oil production; for aesthetics. But to the insects, spiders, birds, reptiles and mammals of the Australian bush these trees are a necessity. The following tour has been designed to highlight some of the great diversity exhibited by the eucalypts. We hope you will pause along the way to consider also the many plants and other life forms with which they normally co-exist.

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From the nursery/office area, heading west your path follows the southern boundary past specimens of some local eucalypts. Immediately on your right a healthy Cherry ballart (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) is possibly parasitising the eucalyptus roots, or even those of surrounding grasses, as this is its normal mode of growth. Although very few plants rely solely on another species to supply them with nutrients, almost all plants grow better in natural associations with others. Acacias and casuarinas are pioneer species with the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen in the soil, thus improving growing conditions. But even the humble grasses, mosses and lichens play their part in a balanced ecosystem. Even more important perhaps are the soil dwellers we cannot see - the mycorrhizae, other fungi and bacteria. Each contributes something not yet fully understood.

Local eucalypts to take note of include Rough-barked manna gums (*E. viminalis* ssp. *cygnensis*) (1), the Brown stringybark (*E. baxteri*) (2) whose seeds are an important food source for the Red-tailed black cockatoo, as well as several Snow gums (*E. pauciflora* ssp. *pauciflora*) (3). Remnants of the latter still grow in isolated pockets throughout southwestern Victoria and serve as reminders of the effects wrought by ice ages during the Pleistocene era on our developing flora. One Snow gum features a small burl. Such growths are often seen in older specimens of River red gum (*E. camaldulensis*) as trees respond to attack by particular insects.

Not far away a Twin-peak Island mallee (*E. insularis*) (4) shows the typical growth form resulting when several stems arise from a swollen lignotuber at their base. This specialized feature also enables new shoots to form should top growth be damaged by fire or physical force.

During spring and early summer a group planting on the southern boundary draws the attention of passers-by.

Comprising Yellow bloodwoods (*E. eximia*) (7) Red-flowering gum (*E. ficifolia*) (6) and Marri (*E. calophylla*) (5) these beauties are members of a subgenus which also includes Spotted gum (*E. maculata*) and the Lemon-scented gum (*E. citriodora*).



E. insularis 4



E. eximia 7

As you pass the massed Banksia plantings and move onto the Lindner walk, three spindly eucalypts can be seen straight ahead. These are the Lemon-scented bloodwood (*E. staigeriana*) (8) found only in a restricted area of northern Qld. Take a moment to smell their aromatic foliage. Heading westward a row of tall powdery-barked *E. citriodora* x *E. maculata* (9) hybrids



E. watsoniana 10

provide perfect contrast for the distinctive flaking bark of their close relative *E. watsoniana* (10) (Large-fruited yellow jacket) Further along the path look for the polished silvery trunks of several Swamp mallets (*E. spathulata*) (11). In the distance, a large Argyle apple (*E. cinerea*) (12) bordering the path provides yet another texture change. Rough brown bark with beautiful silvery green juvenile foliage ensures these trees often feature in large parks and gardens. Close by, *Eucalyptus gittinsii* (13) bears flowers whose stamens are arranged in four distinct bundles rather than the more common circular pattern.



E. cinerea 12

As you pass the shadehouse, a small detour onto the left pathway leads to plantings of *E. talyuberiup* (14) and *E.*



E. gittinsii 13



E. lehmannii 15



E. coccifera 16

lehmannii (15), known for their interesting finger-like, bud caps.

Back onto the Lindner walk and heading down slope, a Tasmanian snow gum (*E. coccifera*) (16) and Silver-leaved ironbark (*E. melanophloia*) (17) on the left are worth a closer look. The former has the distinction of being one of the cold-hardest eucalypts. Across the way, follow the mown track as it winds through an area rich with native grasses. Here three specimens of *E. angustissima* (18) provide examples of the narrowest leaves found on any eucalypt. By contrast, a nearby specimen of the Bell-fruited mallee (*E. preissiana*) (19) features the thick leathery leaves typical of many drought-tolerant species.



E. preissiana 19

Past the tap, look out for the rare Darling Range ghost Gum (*E. laeiliae*) (20) as well as a trio of robust Blue-leaved stringybark (*E. agglomerata*) (21). On reaching the lower section of the Lindner walk several of the most ornamental of the West Australian eucalypts await your discovery. To perform at their best they need a hotter,



E. macrocarpa 23

drier climate than we can provide. Nevertheless they do flower here surprisingly well and their large fruits are always a feature too. Near the blue sign are two small specimens of the Rose mallee (*E. rhodantha* - gazetted as rare) (22) and further along several Mottlecah (*E. macrocarpa*) (23) and Pear-fruited mallee (*E. pyriformis*) (24). Also on show are *E. bloxsomei* (25) featuring the yellowish flaky bark of its close relative *E. watsoniana* seen earlier, and the extremely rare *E. caesia* ssp. *magna* (26) with its distinctive minniritchi bark and pendulous branches.



E. pyriformis 24

Several specimens of Baeuerlen's gum (*E. baeuerlenii*) (27) feature beside the track on the left. This endangered species from the Blue Mountains and isolated sites on the NSW coast tolerates a wide range of growing conditions including very low temperatures. The Arboretum grows many of the rarer specimens of eucalypt and one of these *E. desquamata* (28) is represented by the trio tucked away behind a Manna wattle on your right. Its only known natural occurrence is on Devil's Peak in the Flinders Ranges. Further along, your nose may alert you to plantings of several peppermints. (29) Grouped together are *E. acaciiformis* (looking very much like its close relative *E. nicholii*), a River peppermint (*E. elata*) and White peppermint (*E. pulchella*).

Many of the WA eucalypts that occur in small, restricted habitats appear to have no close relatives. Two such species are the Tuart (*E. gomphocephala*) (30), a tall rough-barked tree, and *E. cooperiana* (31) of modest mallee proportions growing on the right. Both inhabit sub-coastal heath and sand dune areas, but their response to these harsh conditions has resulted in very different growth forms. A little further on another group of large-flowered ornamentals attract the attention not only of humans but also of nectar-seeking birds. At the back, the slender specimens of *E. albopurpurea* (32) and *E. lansdowneana* (33) are notable, while the flanking Fuchsia gums (*E. forrestiana*) (34) laden with fruits have long been garden favourites.



E. gomphocephala 30



E. albopurpurea 32



E. lansdowneana 33



E. maculata 35

Around the next bend, past a group of spotted gums (*E. maculata*) (35), several specimens of the Victorian silver gum (*E. crenulata*) (36) can be seen. Its natural habitat is a restricted area north-east of Melbourne. Nearby is the Scarlet Pear Gum (*E. stoateri*) (37), also from a restricted habitat on the south coast of Western Australia. The ornamental nature of both species however ensures they are widely planted throughout the continent.



E. globulus 38

On your left is a multiple planting of Blue gums (38) - both the Sydney blue gum (*E. saligna*) and the Tasmanian blue gum (*E. globulus*) are here. Certain provenances of the latter are widely grown commercially in the district. At this site the horizontal growth of one specimen provides a unique opportunity to study at close range the difference between juvenile and adult foliage.



E. polyanthemos 39

Nearby, a row of slender Red box (*E. polyanthemos*) (39) display its distinctive poplar-like leaves - close inspection will reveal a small notch at the apex, particularly evident on the juvenile foliage. Further along the walk there will be an opportunity to compare the leaves with similar ones of the Poplar box (*E. populnea*).

The tall white trunks on the left belong to the Brittle gum (*E. mannifera* ssp. *mannifera*) (40), a name which not only indicates a tendency to shed large limbs but also because the wood itself is soft and brittle.

Rounding the next bend the path leads onward and upward past a planting of Flat-topped yate (*E. occidentalis*) (41) on a landslip area to the right. In view of the successful self-seeding which has occurred, it appears to be enjoying this wet, clayey location - similar to its natural habitat. Among the Yellow gum (*E. leucoxydon*) (42) plantings on the left is a beautiful specimen of Brown mallet (*E. astringens*) (43) whose bark takes on a rich copper sheen in late summer.

Turning left and back onto the Lindner walk now, another group of Western Australian ornamentals awaits



E. pleurocarpa 44

discovery. The Bell-fruited mallee (*E. preissiana*) (45) was seen earlier, but this will be the first sighting of Tallerack (*E. pleurocarpa*) (44). The species name refers to the ribbed fruit, which is a decorative feature, but the mealy white foliage and low shrubby habit also make it a popular garden specimen. Like the related *E. gittinsii* seen earlier, flower stamens are arranged in four bundles.



E. orbifolia 47

Past the local, nectar-rich Yellow box (*E. melliodora*) (46) on the left, and the Round-leaved mallee (*E. orbifolia*) (47) displaying its minniritchi bark on the right, we find *E. eudesmoides* (48), a low straggly specimen once again noted for its four-bundled stamens.

Because the vast number of eucalypts collected here in the Arboretum normally experience a very different climate and/or soil type from what we can provide, they may not look garden perfect. Yet insect attack, decay and dying limbs are all part of nature's cycle and therefore normal elements of a functioning ecosystem.

The high slope on the right borders one of the Arboretum's most significant remnant groundflora sites and several of the smaller mallee-type eucalypts are displayed to advantage along the lower edge. Look for the Kangaroo Island mallee (*E. cneorifolia*) (49) and Cup gum (*E. cosmophylla*) (50) which grow together in the wild, as well as the rare Curly mallee (*E. gillii*) (51) from the Flinders and Barrier Ranges. On your right you will see the Poplar box (*E. populnea*) (52) referred to earlier.

Around the next bend and passing the Lily pond, hidden behind a group of melaleucas, the end of the Lindner walk is marked by a lovely specimen of Mugga (*E. sideroxydon*) (53). This form with distinctly blue leaves and showy pink flowers provides an impressive focal point.

But the best is yet to come. Turning right onto the Lookout track you will gain a new perspective on the avenue planting (54) that greets visitors to the Arboretum. Here the smooth powdery trunks of the *E. citriodora* x *E. maculata* hybrids offset the fissured dark bark of *E. sideroxydon* behind - a fitting end to Stage 1 of the Eucalyptus Discovery Tour.



Avenue Plantings 54