

Kings Park Volunteer Guides – Training Course 2026

Look up! - Kings Park Trees

Kings Park is a mixture of one-third cultivated lands and two-thirds valuable native banksia woodland. There is an overarching canopy of trees in the bushland, Botanic Garden and parklands. During Willem de Vlamingh's Dutch expedition in 1697, reference was made in his journal to 'a big, cool, green tree which was full of knots (notches) from top to bottom and very easy to climb to the top', thought to be a tree at the top of Mount Eliza. Many species are introduced (exotic) but some trees in the Botanic Garden precede the establishment of Perth Park in 1895. At that time, John Forrest planted a Norfolk Island Pine, *Araucaria heterophylla*, to mark the naming of the park.

Remnant banksia bushland still extends over two-thirds of Kings Park and is made up of a mixture of open woodland, which varies with soil type and moisture, and the scarp vegetation. The dominant trees of the canopy may change from one area to another. In the bushland, tuart, jarrah and marri are the largest native trees with sheoaks and banksias forming smaller trees.

Eucalypts, or gum trees, conjure up the Australian landscape more than any other tree. Not all eucalypts exude gum, and trees that exude gum may not be eucalypts! The canopy that shelters plants in the Kings Park bushland consists of tuart, jarrah and marri. Many others in the gardens, parklands and drives are exotic. The exotic trees along the drives are gradually being replaced with Western Australian trees. This reduces the 'weed trees' spreading into the bushland, especially after fires.

Eucalypts belong to the Myrtaceae family, of which one characteristic is the presence of oil glands in the leaves. The word 'eucalyptus' is derived from Greek *eu* - well, and *calyptos* – covered. This refers to the bud cap or operculum. Eucalyptus flowers are often showy but have no petals. The petals and sepals form the distinctive bud cap which is shed when the flower opens. This cap is a diagnostic feature of the species.

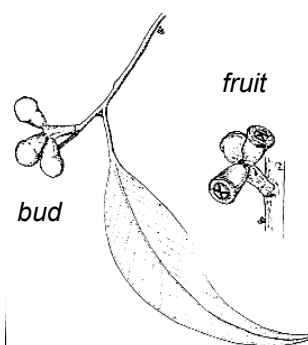
Young plants often have very different shaped leaves from mature plants. Some *Eucalyptus* species have been reclassified as the genus *Corymbia* eg marri, *Corymbia calophylla* (previously *Eucalyptus calophylla*). The main difference is how the flowers are produced in 'corymbs' – groups of flowers with different length stems giving a flat-topped appearance.

MYRTACEAE – EUCALYPTUS

- **Tuart** *Eucalyptus gomphocephala* (*gomphos* - club, *kephale* - head)

The name tuart is derived from Noongar word duart.

It is the largest endemic tree around Perth, growing on the coastal limestone soils. Old trees are ecologically important as they provide a 'boarding house' for birds and other animals, while also supporting many insects such as bud weevils and borers.



Buds – distinctive with the cap larger than the base (club or icecream cone). The stem is flattened below the bud.

Flowers – small, cream-coloured in the summer.

Fruit – bell-shaped with a star or cross through which the seeds are shaken out.

Leaves - often a tuart has a sheen on the leaves which is best seen when looking at the crown against the sky. (Tuart leaves are the LotteryWest Federation Walkway symbol.)

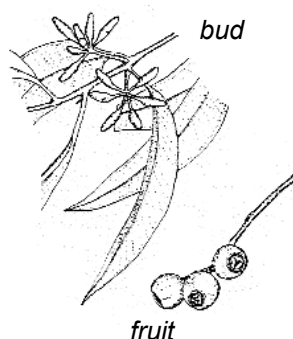
Bark - pale grey (a bit like elephants' legs) and rough, often stained with gum.

Timber - very dense and hard. Used in the past for sailing ships, railway wagons and some furniture. Tuart was used as trunnels (wooden nails) in the building of the *Endeavour* replica. Its tolerance of wind and salt air make it a good tree for coastal regeneration. It is also grown overseas as plantation timber. In 2017, when the tuart at the Long Vista/Forrest roundabout was badly damaged, the removed trunks were used to calculate its age from growth rings. It was found to be at least 100 years old.

Can be found: between Symbiotica and Botanic Terraces on RHS; Tuart Lawn; Scar Tree at bottom of Banksia Garden - evidence of Noongar use of bark, probably for coolamon.

- **Jarrah** *Eucalyptus marginata* (*marginata* - refers to a margin on the leaves)

Most jarrah in Kings Park is regrowth following early logging. Many trees have copped following fire damage or logging (saw pits are evident throughout the bushland). Jarrah was exported and used for railway sleepers and for paving the streets of London. It is termite resistant. The strong, deep coloured **timber** was, and is still, greatly valued and was originally known as Swan River mahogany. Many of Perth's old civic buildings feature polished jarrah. Polished tables in Visitor Information Centre.



Buds - clustered, small and pointed, tending to be pale green or reddish.

Flowers - generally cream, occurring on the end of branches from September to February. Nectar renowned in the production of medicinal honey.

Fruit - single opening through which seed is dispersed.

Leaves - have a distinct margin (edge) to them. The leaves are discolorous - green above and pale below.

Bark - often grey-brown and furrowed, strips off revealing reddish colour. In the Darling Range, jarrah may look different as it tends to be straighter and greyer leaved; coastal jarrah is more stunted.

Jarrah may appear brown in spring. This is generally caused by leaf miner, which lays eggs in leaves and then eats out the leaf. 'Dieback disease' affects jarrah. The plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* causes dieback which enters the tree through the roots. Not only jarrah but many south-west species including banksias are affected. Good hygiene (clean boots, vehicle tyres etc) should be practised to prevent the inadvertent spread of the fungal spores which are easily transported.

Can be found: small tree between Bali Memorial and apartments; entry to Wadjuk car park near the bus stop; 'Plants of the Jarrah Forest' sign near Acacia Garden. Beware, as this woodland path towards Roe Gardens is mainly marri with an understorey of jarrah forest! Marris do grow in the forests with jarrah. There are a few young spindly jarrahs near the brick path at the bottom of this section (opposite Beedawong). Look up, you may be being watched – a favourite roosting place for tawny frogmouths.

- **Silver Princess** *Eucalyptus caesia* (*caesia* – bluish grey)

Not endemic to Kings Park. Distinctive grey, weeping mallee tree with obvious pointed buds, generally pink flowers and silver bell-like fruits. Waxy white coating acts as sunscreen. They have curly brown minniritchi bark on lower trunks. Rare on granite rocks in WA Wheatbelt. Now available in horticulture, and a common garden tree.

Can be found: framed by Symbiotica at Botanic Garden entry.

- **Karri** *Eucalyptus diversicolor* (*diversicolor* – different coloured, ie the leaves, dark on top and pale underneath).

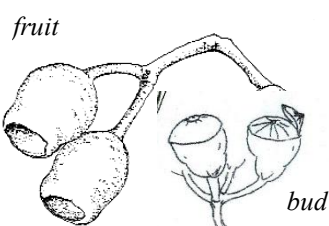
Endemic to the south-west, in high rainfall areas. Species recognised as second-largest flowering tree in Australia. Requires high rainfall therefore found in Walpole and south coast areas. It is a tall tree with angular branches. Branchlets are held in distinctive ‘bunches’ at end of main branches.

Can be found: damp area below elevated walkway; near Pioneer Women’s Memorial.

MYRTACEAE - CORYMBIA

- **Marri** *Corymbia calophylla* (*calos* - beautiful, *phyllum* - leaf)

A common tree in Kings Park, the marri is a remnant of temperate rain forests that once covered the region. Called red gum by early settlers, the Aboriginal name, marri, means 'red' or 'blood'. It is a good shade tree.



Buds - rounded with a small cap. Held in corymb – flowerhead has a flat top as each bud has different length of stem.

Flowers – prolific, cream, (Feb-March) over the outside of the canopy. Aboriginal people steeped the flowers in water to make a sweet drink. Apiarists often placed beehives close to marri stands to enable bees to forage in the nectar-laden trees to produce honey. Important food source for honeyeaters and other small birds.

Fruit - distinctive ‘honkey nuts’ containing very large seeds. A food source for parrots. Heavy ‘gum nuts’ weigh down branches; once the fruit drops, they spring up, causing the branches and limbs to become contorted (‘wiggly-woggly’). The seeds germinate easily and strong seedlings develop quickly, aiding the marri’s resistance to human impact. The seeds were also eaten by Aboriginal people.

Leaves - held upper side upwards, not edge up as in many other eucalypts. Generally quite green. May be yellowing and thinner where affected by bore water.

Bark - grey, rough and flaky (tessellated), often exuding a reddish-brown gum (kino). This kino had many uses for Aboriginal people, including being drunk as a medicine to ease stomach upsets. The bark was used by both Aboriginal people and early settlers to preserve hides .

Timber - impaired by gum and therefore rarely used for building. It is susceptible to termites. Now used in the production of woodchips and for distinctive fine furniture for those who appreciate wood grains.

Can be found: near pathway (LHS) between Symbiotica and Botanic Terraces.

- **Red Flowering Gum** *Corymbia ficifolia* (*ficifolia* - leaves like a fig)

Endemic to the south coast near Walpole. Original Fraser Avenue planting (1898) affected by canker and eventually replaced by lemon-scented gums. One of the red flowering gums was transplanted from one end of Fraser Avenue to the other as an 80 year-old tree and is now near the Lodge - an arborist’s/nurseryman’s success. Plantings seen in eastern Australia and California (sandy soils). The hybrid ‘Summer Red’ has been planted along the path between Fraser’s Restaurant and Administration.

- **Lemon-scented Gum** *Corymbia citriodora* (*citriodora* – lemon-scented)

Endemic to eastern Australia, not WA. The lemon-scented gums greet visitors entering through Fraser Avenue. Warmed or crushed leaves exudes strong scent of citrus. Many of these tall, majestic trees from Queensland, mostly planted in 1938, have plaques at their base recognising

prominent citizens who planted a second batch of red flowering gums (since removed) along Fraser Avenue for the Centenary of Western Australia in 1929.

MYRTACEAE - MELALEUCA

- **Paperbark** *Melaleuca raphiophylla* (raphis – needle, phylla – leaves)

Usually grow on swampy ground. Leaves contain essential oils. Bark soft and papery. Used to wrap and cook food over coals either in the bush or some upmarket bush tucker restaurants.

MYRTACEAE - AGONIS

- **Peppermint [Willow]** *Agonis flexuosa* (*flexuosa* - full of bends, ie the angular nature of the stems)



May have grown along the river. Many specimens were planted in the Botanic Garden, along Poole Avenue and to beautify the bush! In bushland, now considered to be a woody weed, especially where it has responded to fire. Attractive, weeping habit. The suburb Peppermint Grove is named after these trees.

Trunk - often twisted, with shoots produced rapidly after a fire, becoming multi-trunked.

Leaves - long, narrow, on zigzag branch. Aromatic, releases oil if handled, smells of peppermint. Aboriginal people used crushed leaves as an inhalant to clear the head.

Flowers - small, cream, produced in axil of leaves along branch from September to December.

Can be found: lawns near Banksia Garden; Short Vista; a variegated form of the peppermint grows outside the Tuart Toilets.

ALLOCASUARINA

- **Sheoak** *Allocasuarina fraseriana* (*casuarina* - from Malay *casuari* - like feathers of cassowary; *fraseriana* - after Charles Fraser, the botanist on Stirling's expedition to the Swan River in 1827.)

Named 'sheoak' by early settlers, as the timber resembles that of European oaks. Polishes well and forms the counter-tops in the Visitor Information Centre. The wood splits easily and was used for roofing shingles and barrels.

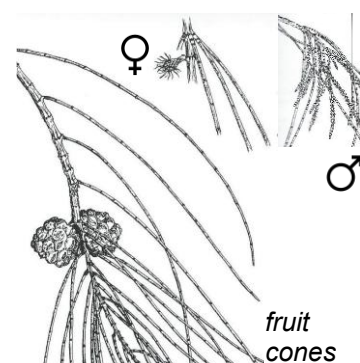
Flowers - trees are male or female. Female trees carry small reddish flower spikes which produce woody cones. Male trees produce catkins which make the tree look brown when the pollen is ready to be dispersed by the wind. Clouds of pollen can be seen in the air.

Fruit - the woody **cones** ripen on the female tree, and the winged seed is released. The winged seeds distinguish allocasuarinas from casuarinas.

Leaves - well-adapted for drought conditions; much reduced (crown of scales); branchlets take on the function of photosynthesis. These form a distinct carpet under trees - favoured spot for greenhood orchids.

Witches' brooms - a growth aberration dangling down from branches which is caused by phytoplasma.

Can be found: Elevated Walkway information bay; on Nature Trail.



MALVACEAE

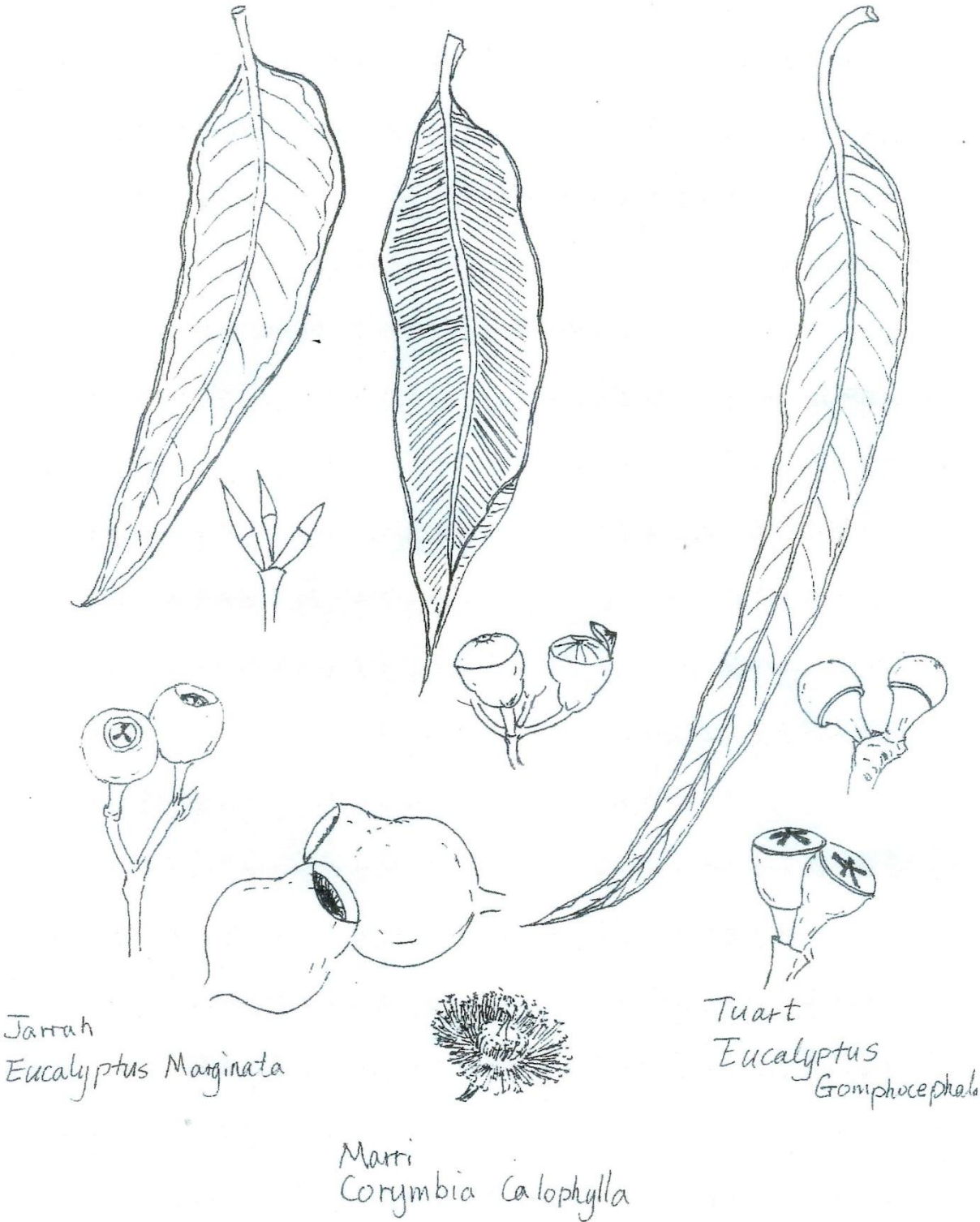
- Boab *Andansonia gregorii*

Gija Jumulu, an iconic boab, is thought to be over 750 years old. Gifted by the Gija people of Warmun in East Kimberley. Boabs grow in tropical savanna with a very different climate to Perth. A lot of research has been done on this tree to ensure its survival in Perth's climate. After the long truck journey in 2008, Jumulu has established and flowers around Easter, producing white night flowers. Unfortunately, the moths thought to pollinate the boab are not around, so it is unlikely that the large brown fruit will develop. Unsightly pits on the trunk are the result of the journey, bouncing on a truck. Boabs heal from the inside out, rather than by the bark growing over a wound in woody plants.

Can be found: Two Rivers Lookout end of Forrest car park.

Information on other iconic Australian trees, including acacias, banksias and wattles, discussed elsewhere.

Comparison of Jarrah, Marri and Tuart - leaf, bud and fruit



Jane Li
30.5.2017

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J Tucker & R Craven Revised 2018
Edited P Heath 2018
Edited L Hall 2023
Formatted for Website August 2024
Edited P Creighton 2026

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