Gum trees of the South East

The unique character of local native bushland is provided by the sight and smell of gum trees. Their open canopy allows sunlight to penetrate to the forest floor where associated species form plant communities. These plant communities are home to many native animals.

The leaves of gums are adapted to withstand poor growing conditions. Tough leathery pointed leaves droop away from sunlight to minimize water loss due to evaporation. Leaves rich with volatile oils make them vulnerable to bushfire, but special adaptations to their bark and trunk protect them. The thick bark of some eucalypts insulate dormant epicormic buds, which are able to reshoot after fire. At the base of others, there are modifications to the trunk known as lignotubers. These also contain dormant buds which the lignotuber protects from fire. Other species recuperate after fire by germination of their seeds in the nutrient rich ash bed that remains.

Soil type, topography and water availability influence the growth characteristics of eucalypts.

**Flooded Gum** (*Eucalyptus grandis*) and the **Sydney Blue Gum** (*Eucalyptus saligna*) grow in valleys or the moist hinterland and are straight and tall.

On exposed rocky mountain outcrops or rocky ridges, the **Bell Fruited Mallee** (*Eucalyptus codonocarpa*) and **Plunkett Mallee** (*Eucalyptus curtisii*) are short and multi-trunked.

Along the free draining soils of gentle coastal slopes, the tall and strong **Blackbutt** (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) and **Moreton Bay Ash** (*Corymbia tessellaris*) are found.
Bark types are variable and are often used in classifying eucalypts into distinct groups.

Half Barks have persistent rough bark around the bottom half of the trunk and above this, the bark sheds to reveal a smooth surface. The Brush Box (Lophostemon confertus) has a rough persistent base of bark with a smooth pink-orange trunk above.

Smooth Barks shed to reveal a dimpled or smooth surface and may have a mass of loose bark retained at their base. Spotted Gum (Corymbia citriodora subspecies variegata) has distinct dimpled smooth surfaced bark, which peels away.

Ironbarks have deeply furrowed persistent bark which is extremely hard. It can be light in colour, or dark - almost black - as with the Narrow Leaved Ironbark (Eucalyptus crebra).

Stringy Barks have a layer of long fibrous bark over a furrowed inner layer. The Tallowwood (Eucalyptus microcorys) has a layer of soft red-brown fibrous bark.

The bark of Bloodwoods (Corymbia intermedia, C. gummifera) is grey to grey brown and fissured, resulting in irregular chunks which may be firm or soft. The common name, bloodwood, derives from a red kino which exudes from the internal veins of the timber. Pink Bloodwood (Corymbia intermedia) has chunky grey bark and grows across the region in various conditions.

The flowers of Eucalypts are clusters of stamens which erupt from a tight bud with a cap called an operculum. The fruit is a capsule, known as a gum nut, and may be small or very large and single or clustered.

Weed invasion is a major threat to biodiversity, while the loss of remnant bushland threatens the habitat of native animals.

The Gum Tree Corridor has been planted by the community and the Friends of the Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens. The trees are grouped in botanical collections which show the different bark types of the regional gum trees.

For more information, visit goldcoastcity.com.au/parks