

5 Mountain Ash Forest - Central Highlands (EVC 30 Wet Forest)

Grouping plants into Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC's) is an artificial means of grouping plants which commonly occur together in similar vegetation communities. This can be determined by the type of soil, rainfall, moisture level retained in the soil, altitude and slope (eg low-lying, flat, foothills, mountains), aspect (north facing, south facing) and amount of canopy and resulting sunlight (from open to closed forest and rainforest). Where a certain combination of these factors recurs, the plant community is likely to be made up of a similar group of species.

Within a typical community there may be a single vegetation layer or up to 3 different layers, known as upper storey, middle storey and lower (or ground) storey.

The same plant may occur in a number of different EVC's. Not all plants listed for a particular community will occur everytime that community is encountered. Some plants may be more common in one section of the Shire of Yarra Ranges, but may not occur in another section even though the EVC is the same. Other plants may only occur in a specific EVC. "Indicator Species" may be common to one EVC only or may be a group that almost always tend to occur together. They help to identify the EVC.

All plants in this Guide to the Indigenous Plants of the Shire of Yarra Ranges have been found within the Shire, although some plants may now be locally rare or extinct. It can never be a definitive list. Many plant communities throughout the Shire are now degraded or no longer exist as urbanisation, agricultural and forestry pursuits and weed invasion have changed the local landscape. Lists have been collated using often small remnant patches which may not give an accurate overall picture of the original plant community.

The vegetation classes used within the Shire are similar to the EVC's used by the Department of Sustainability and the Environment. However they differ in that sometimes classes have been split into separate areas within the Shire (Dandenong Ranges, Central Highlands, Upper Yarra) while others have been included in one all encompassing class. Classes reflect the dominant Indicator Species, usually a eucalypt.

Community structure

Tall open forest dominated by an upper storey of *Eucalyptus regnans* (Mountain Ash) to 70m high in higher rainfall areas. *E. obliqua* (Messmate), *E. cypellocarpa* (Mountain Grey Gum) and *E. viminalis* (Manna Gum) may also be present, the latter especially along watercourses. Blackwoods and Silver Wattles dominate in eucalypt-free areas. The middle storey has scattered trees over tall broad-leaved shrubs and tree ferns. The moist shaded ground layer is usually dominated by ferns with sedges, wire grass and herbs.

Distribution

The most common vegetation community of the Central Highlands from 500-1000m altitude where rainfall is high, cloud cover at ground level is frequent and soil is fertile, well-drained loams. It is restricted to protected sites and gullies, especially on the southern sides of the mountains. It spreads from Mt. St. Leonard in the west with a couple of isolated patches on Mt. Slide along the centre above the Yarra River to the northern boundary of the Shire. There are also scattered patches towards the south from below Warburton to above the Upper Yarra Dam.

Typical suburbs/areas occurring in this EVC are:

Fernshaw, North of Don Valley, Warburton, McMahons Creek and Reefton; north of Powelltown; Flowerpot Hill.

Indicator SpeciesUpper Storey

Eucalyptus regnans Mountain Ash
Acacia melanoxylon Blackwood

Middle Storey

Acacia dealbata Silver Wattle
Acacia obliquinervia Mountain Hickory Wattle
Bedfordia arborescens Blanket-leaf
Correa lawrenceana var. *latrobeana* Mountain Correa
Hedycarya angustifolia Austral Mulberry
Lomatia fraseri Tree Lomatia
Olearia argophylla Musk Daisy-bush
Pittosporum bicolor Banyalla
Pomaderris aspera Hazel Pomaderris
Prostanthera lasianthos Victorian Christmas-bush
Cassinia aculeata Common Cassinia
Coprosma quadrifida Prickly Currant-Bush
Cyathea australis Rough Tree-fern
Dicksonia antarctica Soft Tree-fern
Lepidosperma elatius Tall Sword-sedge
Olearia phlogopappa Dusty Daisy-bush
Pimelea axiflora Bootlace Bush
Polyscias sambucifolia ssp. 1 & 3 Elderberry Panax
Zieria arborescens ssp. *arborescens* Stinkwood
Clematis aristata Mountain Clematis
Rubus parvifolius Small-leaf Bramble

Lower Storey

Acaena novae-zelandiae Bidgee-widgee
Asperula euryphylla Broad-leaf Woodruff
Australina pusilla Shade Nettle
Blechnum nudum Fishbone Water-fern
Dianella tasmanica Tasman Flax-lily
Dichondra repens Kidney-weed
Geranium potentilloides Soft Cranesbill
Histiopteris incisa Bat's Wing Fern
Hydrocotyle geraniifolia Forest Pennywort
Hydrocotyle hirta Hairy Pennywort
Oxalis exilis Shady Wood-sorrel
Plantago debilis Shade Plantain
Poa ensiformis Sword Tussock-grass
Polystichum proliferum Mother Shield-fern
Pteridium esculentum Austral Bracken
Ranunculus plebeius Forest Buttercup
Sambucus gaudichaudiana White Elderberry
Stellaria flaccida Forest Starwort

Tetrarrhena juncea
Viola hederacea

Forest Wire-grass
Ivy-leaf Violet

If you would like further information on the plants of this community go to Recommended Landscape Plants for this EVC or the Complete Species List. Plants are described and illustrated in the Yarra Ranges Local Plant Directory.