



# Gardennote

## Small native eucalypts for gardens

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Clockwise from left: Red flowering gum, coral gum, silver princess, mottlecah

There are many advantages in growing native eucalypts in home gardens, that have generally adapted and evolved in our environmental conditions with a natural resistance to native pests and diseases.

Eucalypts also provide shelter and food for native animals and insects. For us, they provide shade, shelter from the wind, colourful flowers and the scent of eucalyptus oil.

This Gardennote lists some suitable eucalyptus species including the establishment, maintenance, pests, diseases and common problems associated with planting unsuitable species.

### General

Gardens in the metropolitan area are generally smaller requiring lower maintenance. There is a trend towards compact, ornamental and less

intrusive (including root system) trees, which still provide shade, attract pollinating birds and are drought resistant.

In coastal environments, trees should also be resilient enough to withstand strong winds.

Taller trees should be planted on larger properties and small landholdings. Select trees which require low maintenance and are not prone to constant branch breakages. On some properties, trees may be grown as windbreaks, a source of firewood and building materials or as animal shelters.

Eucalyptus leaves contain a very flammable oil. Don't plant your trees too close to the house.

Look around your neighbourhood to find out which trees suit your climate. The best source of information for suitable trees is usually your local shire and your local nurseries.

### Important disclaimer

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## Establishment

Eucalypts may be planted from late April to May onwards after the first good autumn rains when the soil temperature is still high enough to facilitate a good start for the trees. A little fertiliser may be mixed into the soil at the bottom of the hole, which may be:

- Low N and P fertiliser
- Slow release fertiliser for native plants
- Fish emulsion or seaweed fertiliser to boost plant immunity to disease

Water the plants once or twice a week in the first few weeks after planting.

## Maintenance

Established, younger eucalypts generally do not need fertiliser. If nutrient deficiency symptoms appear, which may happen when the plant is actively growing, sprinkle small amounts of the above fertiliser under the canopy and water in.

Water established, younger eucalypts when the soil under the surface is dry or when signs of water stress (wilting, dull foliage colour, leaf shrinking) are apparent and during heat waves. Apply long, deep waterings to encourage a deeper root system.

Mature eucalypts usually draw their water from deep water reserves and don't need supplementary irrigation.

Eucalypts may be pruned to keep the plant in shape and promote flowering. Do not prune in mid summer, when the plant may be under stress.

For water preservation, eucalypts may be mulched with a 5 cm thick layer of mulch. However, be aware that the mulch could contain insect pests, weeds or diseases.

A frequent occurrence in metropolitan gardens is mature tree death, due to water table drop in summer.

## Pests and diseases of eucalypts

Home gardens may lack the environment that provides the pest and predator balance, which natural conditions have.

A number of fungi cause spots and flecks on gum leaves.

Insects as well as fungi and bacteria may cause relatively harmless growth malformations, known as galls.

## Quarantine disease

Eucalyptus rust (*Puccinia psidii*) could occur in Australia and the public awareness of this disease would be helpful. It is the only rust known to infect eucalypts and may cause serious damage in eucalypt plantations. The disease is particularly severe on susceptible eucalypt seedlings, cuttings, young trees, coppice or damaged mature trees. Highly susceptible trees may be grossly malformed or even killed. Growth rates of infected trees are diminished and plantation productivity reduced.



*Eucalyptus rust* (Photo by CSIRO)

PEST OR DISEASE	Damage	CONTROL
Gregarious sawflies	Defoliate young trees	*Mixture of dimethoate plus a wetting agent
Leaf blister sawflies	Blisters on leaves	*Mixture of dimethoate plus a wetting agent
Lerp insects (psyllids)	Sap suckers	*Mixture of dimethoate plus a wetting agent
Leaf tier moth	Makes shelters by rolling the leaves of tip	*Mixture of dimethoate plus a wetting agent
Scales	Sap suckers	*Malathion, white oil
Caterpillars, beetles and weevils	Chew or skeletonise leaves	*Mixture of dimethoate plus a wetting agent
Borers (larvae of longicorn beetles)	Attack trunk and branches	Tree produces natural gum that eventually kills borer
Mites	Shoot and flower distortion or abortion, leaf silvering	*Dimethoate plus a wetting agent
Dieback	Trees die off from top down, especially on hot days	Trunk injection or root drenching with Phosphoric acid
Armillaria	Attack roots and cause dieback	Remove tree

\* Natural predators (birds, parasitic wasps etc) may control this pest naturally. Only apply chemicals when infestation is high.

## Small Ornamental

### Red-flowering gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*)

Red-flowering gum has large clusters of red flowers from mid-summer to autumn and attracts birds. It is native to south-western Australia.

In the metropolitan area it grows up to 6 m high and 4 m wide. The flower colour varies from red, crimson to orange, pink or white. To guarantee colour, grafted varieties are available from nurseries. There are also a number of grafted hybrids, such as the bright red 'Summer Red', and the pink 'Summer Beauty'. *Corymbia ficifolia* prefers sandy soils and is also a very good shade tree. It is a fire retardant as the oil content of the leaves is very low.

This species should be planted at least 3.5 m from any drainage pipe.

Red flowering gum may suffer from a (potentially fatal) stem canker (*Sporotrichum destructor*), which only occurs in planted trees. Avoid bark injuries.

### Coral gum (*Eucalyptus torquata*)

Coral gum, native to the goldfields, may have red, pink, white or cream flowers in spring to early summer. The tree grows up to 6 m high and 3 m wide.

This tree grows best on well-drained soil, is drought and frost resistant (when older) and attracts birds. Coral gum should be planted at least 3.5 m from any drainage pipe. It may become unthrifty, if planted into wet soil.

### Mottlecah (*Eucalyptus macrocarpa*)

Mottlecah is a dense, often sprawling mallee endemic to the wheatbelt, usually on sand plains. It has the largest flowers and nuts of any eucalypt. The plant is silvery grey all year round which is a nice compliment to the deep pink to red flowers from late winter to spring. It is drought-, but not frost resistant. The up to 8 cm wide attract birds.

Mottlecah may grow 5 m high and 4 m wide, but generally it stays smaller in a garden situation. It responds well to pruning, which should be started early in its life to get the desired size and shape. Young plants are susceptible to mite attacks, affecting the leaf tips. Mottlecah should be planted at least 2 m from any drainage pipe.

### Gungurru or Silver Princess (*Eucalyptus caesia*)

Gungurru is a mallee native to the central and eastern wheatbelt. It is always associated with granite outcrops and is drought resistant.

Gungurru flowers from May to September and attracts birds. It has large, showy flowers followed by silvery bell-shaped gumnuts.



Clockwise from left: Fuchsia gum, illyarrie, pear-fruited mallee, tallerack

Its smooth reddish bark peels off in strips, to reveal brightly coloured new bark. The flowers are up to 5 cm across and vary in colour from pink to red to white.

The weeping trees produce little shade and grow up to 5 m tall and 4 m wide. Young plants may be affected by some leaf spot disease, which will ease off when the plants get older. Gungurru should be planted no closer than 2 m from any drainage pipe.

### Fuchsia gum (*Eucalyptus forrestiana*)

Fuchsia gum is a mallee, native around Esperance, with smooth bark and yellow flowers in early spring and summer. It is a bird attractant. Fuchsia gum grows up to 3 m high and 2 m wide and keeps a manageable form rather than sprawling out. It is frost and drought hardy, not susceptible to pests or diseases and suited to most gardens. Fuchsia gum should be planted at least 2 m from any drainage pipe.

### Illyarrie (*Eucalyptus erythrocorys*)

Illyarrie is a small tree native to mid-western sub coastal areas. Illyarrie is an outstanding smooth barked ornamental species with bright red bud caps followed by large yellow flowers in spring and summer. It grows up to a height of 6 m and up to 10 m wide. Unmanaged, the shape is quite irregular mainly because the large nuts encourage a straggly shape. Pruning will maintain a neater shape.

Illyarrie is drought resistant and attracts birds. It is frost-sensitive when young. Young trees may suffer from mildew, which may originate from the nurseries and can easily be controlled with a copper spray. Illyarrie should be planted at least 2 m from any drainage pipe.

## Windbreaks and screens

### Round-leaved moort (*Eucalyptus platypus*)

Round leaved moort, native to the south coast, grows often in clumps, is drought and frost resistant and attracts birds.

Round-leaved moort grows up to 4 m high and 5 m wide, is smooth barked and bushy all the way to the ground, which makes it an excellent wind break for coastal areas.

It grows on most soils. When flowering in spring and summer, it contains balls of lime flowers. Young trees may have some mildew on the tip of the leaves. This species should be planted at least 3.5 m from any drainage pipe.

### Pear-fruited Mallee (*Eucalyptus pyriformis*)

Pear-fruited Mallee is a low straggly, smooth barked mallee native to the wheatbelt. The stems are smooth with much ribboning and adult leaves are dull grey-green. It is up to 5 m high and 3 m wide and flowers red or yellow from May until October.

Pear-fruited Mallee is easy to grow, drought resistant, not susceptible to pests or diseases and an outstanding ornamental feature in the garden. It should be planted at least 2 m from any drainage pipe.

### Tallerack (*Eucalyptus pleurocarpa*)

Tallerack was until recently known as *Eucalyptus tetragona*. It is a straggly mallee native to various sand plains north and south of Perth.

The stems are smooth with attractive, greyish foliage, buds and fruit. Tallerack can be used as a small wind break species, grows up to 8 m high as has white or cream flowers in spring and summer. It can be rejuvenated by hard pruning. Tallerack is drought tolerant but not frost resistant. Young trees are susceptible to mite attacks.



Lerps are a common problem on eucalypts in the Perth area



Round-leaved moort

### Unsuitable species for small gardens

Popular Eucalypts commonly planted in the metropolitan area are: lemon scented gum (*Eucalyptus citriodora*) which grows up to 30 m tall, and Tasmanian blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) which are both from the eastern states.

Some of the native local tall trees are: Tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*), Marri (*Corymbia* (formerly *Eucalyptus*) *calophylla*), Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Flooded Gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*), River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and Karri (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*).

These trees will eventually cause problems with falling leaves and branches which clog up gutters and interfere with lawns. They can pose a hazard in storms.

Removing tall trees is expensive, so it is easier not to plant them in the first place.

### Specimen identification requirements

When sending or delivering samples, the following information is required:

- Collector's name, location (where the specimen was found), full address, telephone number and e-mail address, description of the damage and date collected.

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