

# RED GUM WOODLANDS

## What does it look like?

Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) are one of the most widespread trees across Australia. They are slow growing, but are thought to live for over 500 years. They are a single trunked tree (8-42 m high) with smooth greyish-cream bark, which can be rough towards the base. Leaves are slender, green to green-blue and buds have distinctly pointed caps. Flowers are produced in late spring and early summer and are creamy-white, however flowering intensity is variable and unpredictable from year to year.

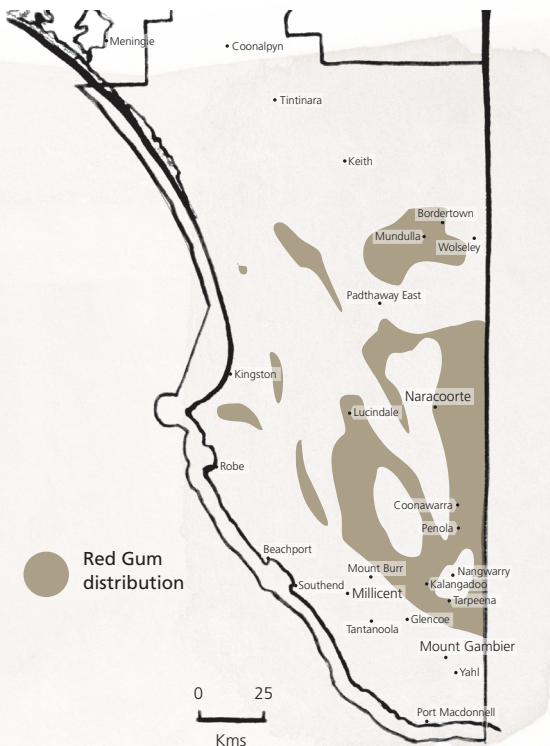
The best way of identifying this tree is by looking at the number and shape of the fruits (nuts).

Red Gum woodlands are generally open and the understorey dominated by native grasses, rushes, sedges, lilies and daisies with shrubs and other trees.

## Where is it found?

In the South East Red Gum woodlands occur on a variety of soil types (usually highly productive soils), but it is now typically associated with wetter, low-lying areas. They can withstand flooding, and can also tolerate drought conditions by dropping leaves and limbs to reduce water consumption.

They are well known as valuable and majestic paddock trees, particularly in areas around Padthaway, areas of Naracoorte and south of Penola. Red Gum woodlands can be found as small, undisturbed remnants in reserves and private land, and as modified woodlands along watercourses (e.g. Mosquito Creek) and fringing swamps (e.g. Mundulla Swamp).



## Importance

Individual Red Gums are very valuable to both people and native animals. The wood has been highly prized for heavy construction, railway sleepers, fencing, wood turning, furniture and firewood. They are also fantastic paddock trees providing shade and shelter to stock.

River Red Gum forests are historically and culturally important. Trees show scars where the bark was removed for canoes or shields and some trees have had the base carefully burnt out for shelter.

The size of some individual trees also convey considerable landscape value and are recognised internationally and contributing to tourism. For example, 'Big Red' at Mullinger Swamp is 39m tall, 12m in trunk circumference and is estimated to be 800 years old.



Barking Owl's like the hollows of tall Red Gums to nest and roost in.



Intact Red Gum woodlands and swamps provide some of the most important wildlife habitat in the state. Older River Red Gum trees (100 years plus) have hollow limbs and main trunks, providing nesting sites and habitat for a range of animals including insects, bats, birds and mammals, and rare and threatened species such as the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Sugar Gliders and Squirrel Gliders.

Other species that can be found in Red Gum woodland include

#### Plants

- Creeping Mistletoe *Muellerina eucalyptoides*

#### Mammals

- Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps*
- Gould's Long-eared Bat *Nyctophilus gouldi*
- Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus*

#### Reptiles & frogs

- Jacky Lizard *Amphibolurus muricatus*
- Banjo Frog *Limnodynastes dumerilli*

#### Birds

- South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii graptogyne*
- Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*
- Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
- Brown Treecreeper *Climacteris picumnus*
- Bush stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*
- Crested Shrike-tit *Falculculus frontatus*
- Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*

#### Invertebrates

- Dark purple Azure *Ogyris abrota*



*Kennedia Prostrata*  
- Running Postman



*Wahlenbergia sp* -  
Native Bluebell

## Threats

In many cases, Red Gum woodlands have been significantly modified to support farming systems and are now present as scattered trees over pasture grasses. Drainage and grazing by livestock have further modified these woodlands making preservation of remaining patches a priority.

**Disconnected remnants:** Woodlands are very small and may be reduced to patches of scattered trees or isolated paddock trees. Paddock trees are subjected to many stressors including ring barking, and trunk damage due to stock rubbing and chewing on them, soil compaction and greatly increased nutrients due to stock camping under them. As a result of these stressors, they are more susceptible to attack by insects such as lerps. Being isolated from other vegetation, the birds that help control these insects are less abundant and visit the trees less often.

**Changing water regimes:** artificial drainage, irrigation and cultivation reduce suitable areas for woodlands to exist and add stress to ageing paddock trees.

**Fire:** stubble burning damages living trees and eliminates dead paddock trees. Dead trees often still have valuable hollows that animals use for nesting and breeding in.

**Grazing:** Red Gum seedlings and saplings are very tasty and are eaten by sheep and cattle, preventing regeneration.

**Weed invasion:** weeds out-compete native plants, preventing natural regeneration.

**Wood cutting:** Due to their valuable timber, River Red Gum trees are often targeted for woodcutting.

## Restoration Action

Any area of Red Gum with native plants underneath are of highest priority but even scattered trees in paddocks (dead or alive), should not be dismissed. They are precious habitat and important stepping-stones for wildlife to move across cleared landscapes.

### Link remnants

Where possible, link remnants of intact woodland or revegetate to connect stands of scattered trees. Revegetate by planting mid-storey seedlings and shrubs. Red Gum seedlings will regenerate naturally in abundance. Securely guard from herbivores, and implement weed control. Once underway, revegetation efforts will require watering for several years to establish.

### Modify water regimes

Restoring water regimes in woodlands would greatly benefit the trees and assist recovery of the understorey.

### Fire-breaks

Paddock trees are particularly vulnerable when prone to stubble burning, therefore establishing fire-breaks is critical.

### Controlled grazing

Management of stock is an important step in protecting these woodlands to encourage natural regeneration. Fencing to control and/or remove grazing for lengthy periods will start this process; it is surprising how many Red Gum seedlings appear once stock have been removed. Once grazing pressure has been removed, a focus on the control of pasture grasses and weeds may be necessary.

### Weed control

Active management of introduced plant species (e.g. Phalaris) and their cover will allow a greater number of native species to persist, particularly in the ground layer.

### Leave fallen timber plant paddock trees

There has been a steady decline in the number of paddock trees left in the landscape so planting some to replace those that have been lost is an investment in the future. Leaving fallen timber in situ provides important habitat for animals like echidnas and small mammals, and the insects that they eat.

*Farmers have shown that conserving biodiversity and native vegetation on their farms supports sustainable agriculture.*

## Further Advice

Contact Limestone Coast Landscape Board on (08) 8735 1204 to supply a list of regional revegetation contractors, consultants and specialists to advise on your project.



*Sugar Gliders have beautiful large eyes and a distinctive dark stripe that extends from the middle of the head to the middle of their back.*



*Craspedia sp* -  
Common Billy-buttons

*Drosera whitakeri* -  
Scented Sundew

Photo: Peter Tucker

