

Badge 2

Plants in Duffys



Background Information

Plants are divided into three groups, or layers; trees, shrubs and ground covers.

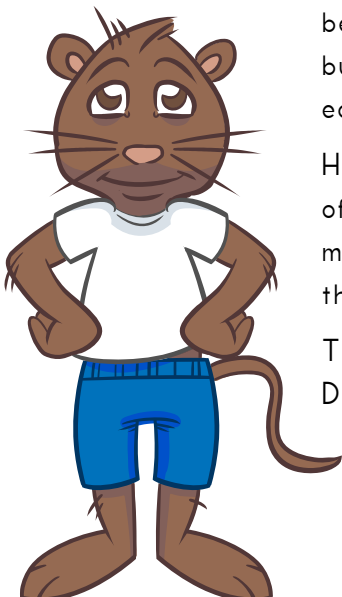
Trees usually have a single trunk and size doesn't matter. Shrubs usually have many stems that start close to the ground. Ground covers are non-woody plants that usually grow close to the ground without much height. However, like everything in nature these rules might be true for most plants but not for all.

Each group or layer of plants is extremely important, as some animals are dependent on a particular plant layer for survival. For example, a bandicoot depends on the ground cover layer of plants for survival.

Some animals such as the magpie move freely between layers. Magpies nest in the tree layer but usually feed in the ground cover layer of the ecosystem.

Healthy ecosystems will contain all three layers of plants. Any area missing a particular layer will most likely be missing the animals that depend on that layer.

There are many different types of plants found in Duffys Forest- here are some of them:



Brown Stringybark

(Eucalyptus capitellata)

Appearance:

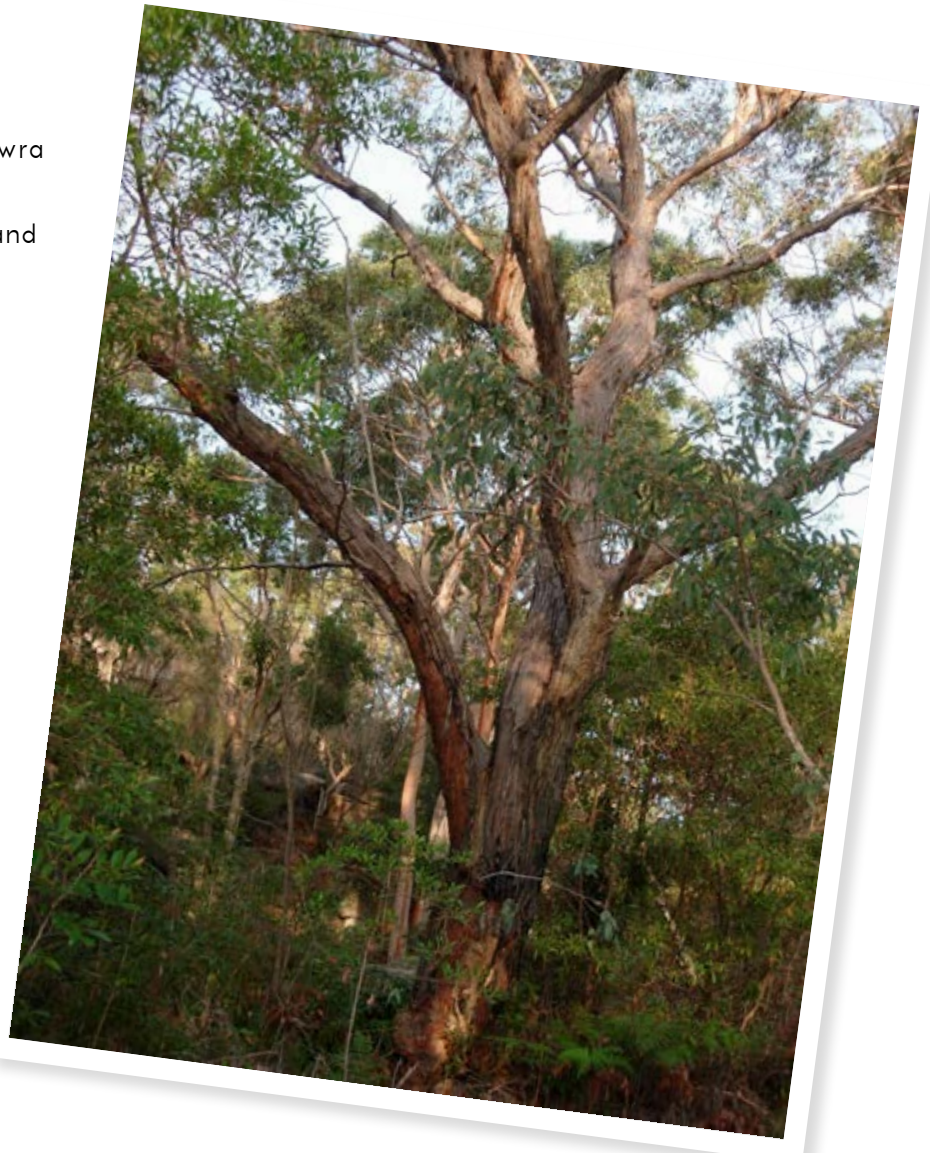
This is a medium sized tree, usually up to 20m in height. It has thick, rough bark which can be rubbed off in long slender fibers. The young leaves are broad while the older leaves are more slender with finely pointed tips. The leaves are greyish - green in colour.

Location:

This plant is found from Karuah in the north to Nowra in the south, mostly on sandstone, on ridge-tops and upper slopes.

How is it used:

In the Sydney area, Aboriginal people stripped off large sheets of Stringybark to make canoe hulls. The ends were softened in a fire and then folded or tied up to make a waterproof hull. Smaller pieces of bark were rolled and used as torches for spear fishing at night. The Brown Stringybark has excellent qualities as timber, being strong, durable and easily split. Early settlers would have used it for fencing, building and shingles. Birds and ringtail possums use the bark as a nest building material and possums, honeyeaters, insects and flying foxes feed on nectar and flowers when the trees flower in summer.



Kangaroo Grass

(Themeda australis)

Appearance:

This is a tufted grass that grows to about 1 metre high. It is bluish-green when young but becomes a distinct brown and purplish colour with maturity.

When in flower, the upper leaf bares two or three clusters of spikelets which contain the flowers. These spikelets are released when ripe and grow into new plants.

Location:

This plant is one of the most widespread species of flora in Australia. It occurs in all States and Territories, from the coast to the dry inland, in grassy open forests and woodlands. It prefers heavier clay soils.

Other features:

It flowers between September and March and grows mainly in spring and summer.

It is an important food for Kangaroos, hence the common name Kangaroo Grass.



NSW Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*)

Appearance:

This plant is a common erect shrub that grows to about 4 metres high. It is a Sandstone Woodland plant.

In November it produces small white flowers and in December they turn red and change into fruit, making a stunning display in the bush.

When not in flower the leaves can help with identification as each leaf is divided into three (3-foliolate) and the edges or margins of the leaves are 'toothed'.



Location:

This plant is found on slopes and gullies in open forest in the NSW coastal region and inland to the Blue Mountains. It prefers sandy soils.

How is it used?

This plant is a decorative display at Christmas time and is very popular in gardens. Christmas bush is widely cultivated, and the flowers have been used as Christmas decoration in Australia since early colonial times.

Spiny Bossiaea (*Bossiaea obcordata*)

Appearance:

This plant is a small, rigid, twiggy shrub about half a metre high. It has alternate heart-shaped, spiny leaves that are small and up to 6cm in length.

Flowers are up to 1cm long and are yellow with a red centre. Its flowers are produced between August and October.

Location:

This plant likes open forest and shrubland, preferably with sandy soils. It occurs all along the coast and tablelands of NSW and up into the Blue Mountains.

Other features:

Bossiaeas are in the Fabaceae family, which is the third largest plant family in the plant kingdom. The legumes that we eat are also in this family, including peas, beans, lentils, peanuts and soybeans. Legumes are important for fixing nitrogen in the soil.



Apple Berry (*Billardiera scandens*)

Appearance:

This is a common little twining shrub found in the undergrowth of forests. It can grow to about 3 metres long. The flowers are yellow and bell shaped. They hang from the stems. The leaves are long and thin and about 5cm long.

Its fruit are cylindrical, plump and hairy, are about three centimetres long, and hang from the end of the stem. The common name comes from the shape of its fruit.

Location:

This plant is found along the coast and ranges of all eastern states. It prefers forest habitat and is less common in scrub and heathland.

Other features:

The fruit are really horrible to eat unless they are purple when they are ripe. Aboriginal People are believed to have eaten the green unripe fruit after they had been roasted.



Waratah

(Telopea speciosissima)

Appearance:

This plant is a small shrub that grows 2-3m high. It has stiff, veined, irregularly toothed leaves and a gorgeous crimson red flower. Its fruit is shaped like a boat and quite unique. The Waratah has a large underground swollen stem, called a lignotuber, from which it re-grows after fire.

Location:

This plant is found in many areas from the coast to the mountains, from the central coast to Ulladulla. It is found in Sandstone Woodland and forests.



How is it used:

The flowers produce nectar, which provides food for birds and pygmy possums. Waratahs make lovely garden plants and cut flowers.

Other Features:

“Waratah” is an aboriginal name. Its botanical name means “most beautiful plant seen from afar”. Waratah is the NSW State emblem. The Burraborang people in the southern Blue Mountains told a story of Krubi, an aboriginal girl who waited on a sandstone ridge waiting for the return of her lover from battle. She was dressed in the red skin of a rock wallaby, ornamented with the red crest of a Gang-gang cockatoo. When he failed to return, she willed herself to die and passed away into the sandstone ridge. The Waratah grew in her place.

Grevillea caleyi

Appearance:

This is a medium sized shrub that grows to 4 meters in height. The leaves are divided and 'fishbone like' up to 15cm in length. Its branches, leaves and flower stalks are all covered in soft hairs. The flowers are dark burgundy-red in colour and are shaped like a toothbrush. Flowering occurs in late winter-spring.



Location:

Grevillea caleyi is an endangered species and is protected under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. This plant is only found in Sydney within a 6 kilometre radius around Terrey Hills.

Grevillea caleyi is naturally found on ridge tops, growing in the ironstone soils of Duffys Forest. In the past these soils were quarried for roads and gravel. Now the threats still continue, with land clearing for development destroying more and more of its habitat.

Other features:

Fire is important for the regeneration of this species of *Grevillea*, as the seeds stored in the soil are activated by fire. Too much fire will deplete the seed store in the soil leading to a decline in plant numbers, and not enough fire will limit the growth on new plants. It is therefore important that fires in these special areas are planned and managed.



By

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