
Drouin Significant Tree Types and Values

Significant Tree Types

1. Remnant Eucalypts

Drouin was not settled until the 1870s. The district was one of the last in Victoria to be settled, and with good reason, for the heavily timbered hills and gullies intimidated early settlers. Like other parts of Baw Baw, it was a land of forests growing on rich volcanic soils, with dense scrub and swampy gullies. Despite the area's startling beauty, many felt trapped by the hills and trees; the intimidating stretch of tall timber between the Baw Baws and the ocean were flanked by swampland. One pioneer described the confines of the tall straight walls of timber that surrounded him as 'very like a large jail.

Early settlers had believed the soil must be enormously rich to feed the giant timber forests. Unfortunately, the abounding undergrowth only reflected the abnormally high rainfall of 42 inches a year.

Tall wet forests of Mountain Grey Gum, Blackwood (wattle), Strzelecki Gum and tall tree ferns covered the hills with other eucalypts including messmates and peppermints growing in the more open forest areas.

Most of these giants were cut down by the early settlers to make way for the railway, farmland and to sell timber to the lucrative building and firewood market in Melbourne. Timber was a valuable 'cash crop' in Drouin's early years. Despite this, 150 years later many remnant giants have survived within the current residential boundary of Drouin and many are Mountain Grey Gums or Strzelecki Gums in excess of 30-metres height with trunk girths in excess of 4m (1.27 m Diameter at Breast Height). Some are single trunked trees and some are multi trunked; possibly the reason why these have survived to this time. Drouin continues to have magnificent remnant eucalypts within its township.

The remnants visible today are partly due to the fortunate position of the tree, but also the legacy of the Buln Buln Shire, in particular Leo Boeyen the superintendent of Parks and Gardens from 1959 to 1986, who fiercely advocated for the retention of the remnant trees we see today. Past councilors describe his words as "Over my dead body!".

Vegetation and heritage overlays prepared by the Baw Baw Shire in 2006 did not list any remnant or native trees in Drouin, only European planted trees. This has made remnant trees particularly vulnerable and many healthy trees have been cut down in the name of 'safety'.

The Strzelecki Gum (*Eucalyptus strzeleckii*) is listed as Vulnerable under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and as 'Threatened' under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. Since 2006, a National Recovery plan has been instituted to protect the species. It has been estimated that between just five and fifteen thousand individual trees remain, nearly all in West and South Gippsland.

Many remnant Strzelecki Gums are located within Drouin's road reserves and parks, most of which can accommodate the height and spread of the trees. A considerable number are also located on private land including future urban growth zones. Providing

protection for these threatened trees must be considered with some urgency before land is prepared for residential development by developers. One large Strzelecki Gum giant in Drouin is 8.1 m trunk girth on land earmarked for development.

Drouin's true giants are the Mountain Grey Gums (*Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*). Whilst this is a more widespread species than the Strzelecki Gum, in parts of NSW the Mountain Grey Gum is also listed as vulnerable. Fortunately, many of the large Mountain Grey Gums are in parks and road reserves and hopefully with careful management they can survive to a venerable age. Some other outstanding examples are on private land earmarked as urban growth zone. These will need protection if they are to be preserved for Baw Baw's future generations.



Within Drouin, two notable giants are 'Jack's giant' with a trunk girth of 8.9 m and 'The Settlement Giant' with a trunk girth of 12.5m.

Some pockets of Drouin contain several other remnant eucalyptus species which are also particularly notable:

- Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*); only a few have been found and one is a giant at 6.75 m trunk girth making it very significant.
- Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus* ssp. *globulus*); only six remnants have been found in a pocket at the west entrance to Drouin, the largest being 4.9 m trunk girth.
- Narrow-leaved Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata*); a number of these have been found in various places
- Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*); There are some notable messmates of large size and there are also some notable forest areas of messmate. The largest messmate is in Binbeal Road with a trunk girth of 6.9 m and another called 'Grandfather' in Civic Park which has a trunk girth of 5.9 m.
- Brown Stringybark (*Eucalyptus baxteri*); in several pockets.
- Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*). Scattered within road and public open space reserves, with one giant of 4.0 m trunk girth located near Bellbird Park. A stand of Swamp Gum is also located within the Amberley Estate Bushland Reserve.



2. Reserves, Parks and Groups of Trees

Many remnant gum trees (eucalypts) and self-seeded native understory trees and shrubs are currently located within unmade government road reserves within the town of Drouin. These are priceless tracts of vegetation and represent not only a glimpse into the forests of the past but also in terms of high habitat-value for birds, small native animals and insects. The potential these areas of vegetation have for future walking paths, bird watching and passive recreation is very high. They also contribute to providing shade and cooling during summer as well as air filtration and noise and wind buffering for adjacent properties. These corridors of trees have a high asset value because they support the birds that utilize adjacent wetland areas with safe roosting perches. If we lose these trees then we lose the birds from the wetlands as well.

One such road reserve which has been exposed to unfortunate outcomes is on the west and north side of the Crystal Waters Estate where planning for the subdivision allowed for residential block to be located in close proximity to the remnant gum trees, resulting in many of the trees being subsequently lopped or removed due to safety issues. These beautiful old trees are now the subject of ongoing concerns. It is hoped that this outcome will be prevented in the future.

There are also some tracts of remnant vegetation on private land which under the parameters of the new PSP are in urban growth zoned land. Where it has been possible, this project's assessment of significant trees in Drouin has sought to identify these but from a distance. The presence of significant trees on private land requires further investigation.

Former Shire Council's within Baw Baw have had a clear vision of parkland development in the last 30 years of its life before amalgamation into the Baw Baw Shire in 1995. A number of significant tracts of land were set aside for parkland incorporating both remnant, native and planted trees. These parks and reserves now have large trees, high shade cover, high habitat value and are used well by the community.

Drouin Civic Park, as an example, is home to a few large remnant Mountain Grey Gums in addition to many planted exotic and Australian trees. In 1980, the then Buln Buln Shire Council received a Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation award for the planning and development of Civic Park.

The members of the Committee for Drouin working party undertaking this project have been amazed at the richness and diversity of the parks and reserves in Drouin.



3. Exotic and Planted Trees

From early on in Drouin's history, Council has sought to beautify the town by street planting. In the early 1900s, elms were planted through the town area along The Gippsland Road, renamed the 'Princes Highway' after the Prince of Wales visit in 1920. It is believed that four of these elms still stand outside Memorial Park. Many of the notable avenues in the town are witness to a time of planting in the 1920s and 1930s. The ficifolia trees planted by school children are perhaps the only planted Australian trees and these have now become the namesake of the town. The predominance of early plantings was European trees such as English elms, planes, and English oaks.

Along the 'development road' of Main South Road, a long row of English elms was planted with some pollarded plane trees and these plane trees were continued along both sides of Lardner Road. English oaks were planted as shade for livestock along the south side of the Drouin sale yards. This is now home to Oak Street Kindergarten, which 'has a unique old-world setting' with its beautiful oak trees which provide valuable learning experiences for young children.

Some exotic trees made their way into Drouin town via Roy Everard Ross who was the Buln Buln Shire engineer from 1925 to 1946. He brought back the seeds of Cape Chestnut trees from one of his trips abroad. These were cultivated and planted on the road reserves of the Princes Highway on the west entrance to the shopping area. Interestingly, Ross was passionate about tree conservation and he set up the Trust for Nature conservation program via the legacy of his estate. One of these Cape Chestnuts was moved in the late 1960s, and sadly, because it had no protection overlay, was chopped down this year in July 2015; a prime example of why this register is needed.

In the early 1950s, there were several parks in Drouin which had become run down. People in the town reported that Drouin looked 'lacking in trees' at this time. With the appointment of Leo Boeyen as Parks and Gardens superintendent in 1959, a strategic planting program commenced. His workers said that he was always filling gaps and planning the next row or avenue of trees. He used good stock trees for seed and cultivated the seedlings in the Shire nursery. Keith Pretty says in his book "it was noted that an average of 6000 trees per year had been planted in the Shire" during Leo's time.

Other exotic trees were planted on private property early on in Drouin's settlement. Some prominent properties on the fringe of Drouin, which were owned by families of note in the town, now have very large oaks, elms, planes, palms and other exotics planted at or soon after the turn of the century. These important trees have no protection and are vulnerable in the path of residential development. Unfortunately, the heritage study of 2011 only identifies one oak tree and one avenue of Bhutan cypress separate to a listed house, on private property.



4. Streetscapes

Many streets in Drouin are noted for their beauty. Waddell Road is quoted by many as being the most beautiful street in Drouin because of the remnant Mountain Grey Gums along both sides of the winding road providing tall canopy connection. There are other roads like Shillinglaw Road and Settlement Road with remnant and young gums along their edges. Unfortunately, residential developments impinging on these will mean compromise of some sort. It is hoped that some of these trees can be preserved particularly on the south side of Drouin where there are currently links between these vegetation corridors for birds and small animals and there has been less residential development on this side of the town.

The Baw Baw Shire has strategically marked some 'gateway' tree corridors on the PSP plans such as parts of Lardner Road, Weebar Road and McGlone Road. These corridors have huge remnant tree corridors of great beauty, providing very high habitat value to native birds. Keeping these corridors and planting further understory trees will greatly add to the livability and quality of Drouin.

Other streets in Drouin have aesthetic beauty because of the planted rather than remnant trees; jacarandas, tristanias, paperbarks, waterhouseas, kurrajongs, brush boxes and small gums. Some of these create character and charm along with the other tree benefits of shade, noise absorption, added house value, etc.

Some pockets of Drouin have micro climates of their own, with the residents taking ownership of their area and 'planting well', encouraging bird life and adding value through their softened and cooled streetscapes.



Significant Tree Values

1. Environmental

Trees can have a significant influence on the environment and aesthetics of an area. Some of these environmental benefits include:

- ❖ Improving air quality
- ❖ Providing shade, shelter and wind protection
- ❖ Reducing glare and reflection from buildings
- ❖ Providing food and shelter for wildlife
- ❖ Reducing stormwater runoff
- ❖ Reducing energy use and costs of nearby buildings by reducing surface temperatures in urban environments and providing shade
- ❖ Adding interest and improving the aesthetics of an area
- ❖ Helping to retain or improve the character and image of a town or place

The livability benefits of trees have now been backed by science. Trees are the frontline against the depredations of pollution and heatwaves, at a time when climate change is exacerbating weather conditions. The shade of urban trees has been shown to reduce the temperature by up to 8°C, reducing air conditioner usage by 12-15% and prolonging the life of roads and asphalt surfaces by 3-4 times.

Baw Baw Shire has never had a shortage of trees within its towns and environs, but this is no longer a 'given' as development comes, unless we view our trees as assets and ascribe them the economic value they should have had all along.



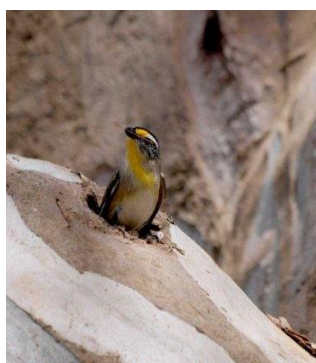
2. Ecological

Much of Australia's native wildlife is arboreal, and healthy urban trees contribute to biodiversity and habitat. Urban forests in towns and cities around the world have been shown to support a large range of species, sometimes even birds or animals on the endangered species list. The flowers, fruits, leaves, bark and wood are used by many of our native birds, mammals, reptiles and insects. Even dead trees or branches play a vital role in providing habitat for many indigenous species.

The urban trees and remnant forest patches within the Drouin township support a surprising variety of birds. Galahs, Little Corellas, Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, Striated Pardalotes and Tree Martins are often seen using hollows in the old remnant giant eucalypts for nesting. Canopy nesting species such as Ravens, White-faced Herons and Black-shouldered Kites are also making use of Drouin's tall giant eucalypts and understory birds such as Brown Thornbills, White-browed Scrubwrens and Eastern Yellow Robins can be seen flitting throughout some of the dense bushland reserve areas. The blossoms of the eucalypts attract a variety of honeyeaters and insectivorous species and birds such as Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Golden Whistlers can sometimes be seen and heard in the tree corridors along streets and beside the freeway.

Boobooks can be heard calling at night and many of Drouin's giant eucalypts show evidence of occupation by possums and Sugar Gliders. White-throated Treecreepers are regularly seen working the trunks of stringybarks. A pair of Crested Shrike-tits feeding in a small reserve on the town's edge and a nesting pair of Leaden Flycatchers are all a testament to the value of retaining and protecting our precious native vegetation.

Drouin's trees and forest patches play a key role in preserving local wildlife species that might otherwise be lost and they help to give residents a connection with nature. In sharp contrast, new residential areas have no trees. Even low density residential areas have very few habitat trees. Most new areas have ornamental bushes and grasses. There is little if any shade cover and the temperature on days of extreme heat is elevated in these areas. There are little to no hollows for birds. This will mean the disappearance of native birds from our urban gardens and the benefits they bring, if significant native areas and remnant trees are not preserved. Including trees into urban planning helps to develop residential zones that are climate resilient, pleasant places in which to live and that are also wildlife friendly.



3. Landscape and Heritage Values

Drouin's large remnant eucalypt trees (20-30 m in height) and large planted trees (12-15 m height) are visually significant within the urban landscape. They provide not only significant canopy shade cover but also visual landmarks and structural landscape foundations. As towns develop having 'skylines' with large structures, trees are a key element in developing local landscape character.

Mountain Grey Gums, Strzelecki Gums and other eucalypts are a visible reminder of the landscape of the great forests of Drouin prior to its settlement by Europeans. Many of the 'giants' identified in Drouin are considerably older than the 150 years since Drouin's settlement. The people who settled in Drouin and established the town, lived, worked, played and walked under these same trees. What is remarkable is that these giants have survived.

Tree corridors and connection between corridors perform important functions at a local landscape level, supporting wildlife movements, providing wind and noise buffers, protecting soil from erosion, soaking up excess water and reducing flooding, providing screening of factories and roads, providing shade for new estates and parklands, softening the harsh brick and concrete lines of 'cut and fill' developments and creating healthy communities.

Many of the old European trees were planted in the early 1900s as the town was being developed. These elms, planes, oaks, palms and others are now old; some are over 100 years old. They are visual reminders of the people who planted them and the stories of these men, women and families who linked their lives to Drouin. It's no exaggeration to say that trees provide the single biggest contribution to a heritage landscape. A tree is usually the last living link between our lives and the lives of people a century ago.

These old European trees are now spectacular specimens; lacy sculptural forms in winter, spectacular greens in spring, covered shady canopies in summer and glorious reds, yellows, browns and oranges in Autumn.

Trees and vegetation within Drouin that are currently listed under the Heritage Overlay include:

- ❖ Pepperell Drive oak
- ❖ Bhutan cypress old driveway
- ❖ Flowering gum avenue Princes Way
- ❖ English elms on Main South Road
- ❖ Bellbird habitat at Bellbird park
- ❖ Two pines at the cemetery
- ❖ *Two Norfolk island pines at listed house*
- ❖ *Palm and cypress at listed house*
- ❖ *Two palms at listed house*
- ❖ *One palm and hedge at listed house*
- ❖ *One liquid amber at listed house*



There are many more trees of heritage significance which have not been listed on this Heritage Overlay.