



FORESTRY

All Levels

Purpose

To help you explore Australia’s forests and their products as part of the creation God gave us to use and care for.

Learning

Trees are an extremely important part of the world. In fact it has been predicted that if more than one third of the world is cleared of its forests, life as we know it would cease to exist.

Australia has been blessed with a great range of trees but many early settlers didn't realise what the benefits of some of these trees were. In fact, they replaced many native trees with trees that they knew from their home country. One settler was quoted as saying, ‘Trees are everywhere. They choke up the valleys and blanket the countryside preventing good farming. This country will be of no use until the axe, plough and fire of the settlers clears the landscape of trees.’ This mentality led to much destruction of native forests, often in areas where it could have been of more benefit if left undisturbed. This is obvious in Victoria’s 'Mallee, country where much soil was lost by wind erosion in the first 100 years till special farming techniques were developed.

Australia has thousands of types of trees of which the two largest groups are Eucalypts and Acacias of which there are over 600 species. Many eucalypts look similar but species vary from 6 to 100 metres in height. There are six main groups which are distinguishable by their bark.

- 1. Gum smooth bark (Lemon Scented Gum).
- 2. Bloodwood rough bark, even on small branches (Red Bloodwood).
- 3. Ironbark very deeply furrowed hard bark (Red Ironbark).
- 4. Stringbark rough, long fibred bark (Messmate).
- 5. Peppermint greyish bark which tends to crumble when rubbed (not on smaller branches).
- 6. Box flaky thin scaly bark which won't pull off trunk easily (Yellow Box).

The most reliable way of telling Eucalypts apart is to collect buds and nuts and compare these to the chart. On the other hand the other very large group, Acacias, are usually identified by their foliage. They vary from small ground covering shrubs to very tall trees. There are many other smaller groups of trees and shrubs which make up our forests. Some of these groups are Banksias, Casuarinas, Cypresses and a host of rain forest species. Trees provide homes for insects, birds and animals. They also bind the soil to prevent erosion, provide us with oxygen and give us timber to build with and keep us warm. To study trees, a dried collection of leaves, flowers and buds is a great help. To do this collect small parts of the plant (avoiding permanent damage), lay them carefully between layers of newspaper and place a weight on top. This paper should be changed after three days (to avoid mildew) and then again after a week. They should be dry enough to mount after another week (two weeks total). Ideally they should then be mounted on a sheet of paper with details presented in this manner.

Date of collection

Name (common).....

Name (botanic).....

Location.....

Height (up to)

To estimate the age of a tree once it has been felled you can count the rings. This can be difficult with some trees but it is the best way to suggest a fairly accurate age. Trees have many different uses and help us in many ways.

Please answer the following.

1. Suggest eight uses for trees or their by-products.

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2. List four ways in which trees make life easier or more pleasant.

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3. List four problems that can occur when forests are removed.

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Doing

- 1. Collect and mount correctly leaves from 15 different native trees.
- 2. Make a chart or poster on the subject ‘Bushfire prevention’.
- 3. Complete a tree planting project organised by your Counsellor with your local council or service club.
- 4. Trees are mentioned quite often in the Bible. Find four texts from the Bible and write them down in your own words.

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Reflection

Through this badge we can see God’s glory in nature. If you found this subject interesting you could complete the badge ‘The Bush’ and continue reading up on it. Ask your Counsellor to sign below and arrange for the presentation of your badge.

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