

23. Teacher notes on plant community descriptions

Plant communities can be described in several different ways and the type of classification used in park management documents relates to the level of detail needed. Some classification schemes allow for quite specific groupings of plant species to be identified while others are designed for looking at vegetation communities on a Statewide level and so do not provide much detail on plant communities at the park level.

Bioregions

Bioregion, or Biographical Region, is a term used at a **national** level to describe areas that have broadly similar ecological characteristics. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment's publication *Victoria's Biodiversity: Directions in Management* describes the 22 bioregions identified for Victoria. Given their broad characteristics, bioregions are not a useful classification scheme for noting different types of vegetation within one particular park.

Broad Vegetation Type (BVT)

Broad Vegetation Type (BVT) is a plant classification scheme used at the **State level**. This classification scheme is useful for comparing vegetation cover of the State historically with vegetation remnants found today. BVT maps are modelled at the 1:250 000 scale.

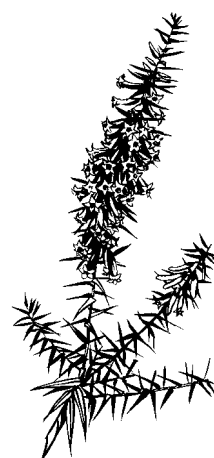
BVTs are used by the Department of Natural Resources in their maps for the *Biodiversity in Victoria* publications. The map of BVTs for 1987 can be compared with the map of BVTs for Pre-1750 to see how vegetation cover has changed over time since European settlement. The BVTs for 1987 can be used to determine aspects such as which BVTs are most depleted, which BVTs are rare, and which BVTs are adequately reserved in conservation reserves.

BVT mapping is not based on direct field observation but is modelled on broad scale land systems – it is therefore a simplified overview of the actual vegetation patterns on the ground and so is not very detailed at the park level.

BVTs describe vegetation by dominant species and structure of the plant community (e.g. Box Ironbark Forest).

BVTs

- Coastal scrubs and grasslands
- Coastal grassy woodlands
- Heathy Woodland
- Heaths
- Box Ironbark Forests
- Lowland Forests
- Dry Foothill Forests
- Moist Foothill Forests
- Montane Dry Woodlands
- Montane Moist Forests
- Sub-alpine Woodlands
- Plains Grasslands
- Plains Grassy Woodlands
- Wimmera Mallee Woodlands
- Herb-rich Woodlands
- Mallee and Mallee Heaths
- Mallee Woodlands



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Ecological Vegetation Type (EVT)

Ecological Vegetation Type (EVT) is a plant classification scheme based on direct field observation and mapping and so provides more detail and the greater accuracy required at the **park level**. EVT classification is therefore more suited than BVT Classification to conservation management at the local scale. EVT maps are modelled at the 1:100 00 or 1:25 000 scale. Not all of Victoria has been mapped yet for EVTs.

EVTs describe vegetation by the dominant species present.

See Resource sheet 24: *Forest ecosystems* for descriptions of common ecosystems such as rainforests, wet sclerophyll forest and dry sclerophyll forest.

Park management plans

Park management plans produced in the 1980s and 1990s did not describe the park's vegetation communities in terms of BVT or EVT classification schemes because these classifications have only been developed and progressively applied since the late 1990s.

Many park management plans describe the park's main vegetation types in even more detail than EVT's, drawing on the structure of the plant community and dominant species present.

Vegetation type terms used include:

- Rainforest/Cool temperate rainforest
- Forests (sub-categories are variously termed tall, wet, dry or sclerophyll, open or closed forests)
- Woodland
- Heathland



Brown Stringy bark © MT