

Eucalyptus Eco Poetry Project

University of the Third Age

The **Eucalyptus Eco Poetry Project** is a “branch” of the *New Shoots* project and a collaboration between The Red Room Company and Bundanon Trust.

New Shoots celebrates, cultivates and collects poems inspired by plants to deepen our personal and cultural connections with nature.

With support from the Dahl Trust, the project helped us meet and to make new emotional connections with eucalypts at Bundanon. Through this poetic lens we uncovered hidden stories and secrets of the iconic green giants we often take for granted.

Find out more about *New Shoots*
redroomcompany.org/projects/new-shoots

“Eucalyptus is the world’s second-largest genus of large trees, after the figs, yet figs are spread over six continents while eucalypts are confined to one.” ~ Tim Low, *Where Song Began*

Eucalypts, more than any other plant family, visually identify Australia. There are over 900 eucalypt species which have adapted to nearly every environment. Included in the Eucalypt family are the genus *Angophora* and the recently recognised *Corymbia*.

Eucalypts are believed to have evolved from ancient rainforest species in response to great changes in continental movements as well as the landscape, soils and climate of Australia. In south-eastern Australia, nearly all eucalypt species have green leaves and yellow-white flowers. Elsewhere, in tropical regions and Western Australia there are more spectacular flowers.

**Mellifluous name ~ *Corymbia maculata*
by Caroline D**

Spotted gum, we visual humans call you
The magic of your dimpled, mottled trunk
Wrinkles of time,
Strong, grooved frozen ripples
Cool to my touch
Yet beyond that surface
Your inner heart is pulsing
Bringing nourishment from the earth
For flowers, leaves in buttressing roots.
My short span a pin prick in time
That you adorn for aeons.
Cluster close to others of your land
Support and share this earth.

**Untitled
by Rob O**

Iron barks standing tall & strong
providing shelter for the throng
birds they feed & nest on limbs
the furrowed bark where insects live
lichen grows on southern side
the thick bark tells the story of its life
impenetrable to a fire the passes
its life cut short for railway sleepers

**A FORK IN THE IRONBARK TREE
by Denis S**

Tough, gnarled, strong the ironbark stands
Reaching for the sun that bathes our lands
Its roots are buried, its foundations firm
Its trunk a totem tall and stout.
What stories could this ancient arbor tell
If only I had time to stop & listen?
When did it say it all began?
I gaze in awe at this wondrous giant
Its usefulness for years so pliant.
For flooring, sleepers, furnishings few
It'll keep you warm in a fire too.
The upper branches spread every which way,
seekin the sun throughout the day
and at night a haven provides
for birds & animals to safely abide.
But what's this at the ironbark's collar?
A fork from a table not from the tree
What could it tell or what should
we see!



Untitled
by Pam B

Oh to be evergreen –
Flourishing, enriching
Scribbly gum –
Artist dabbling...
Soft greens and greys.
Soothing,
Harbouring – to
A safe return to the light...of white.



The Gathering of the Eucalyptus Leaves
by Wendy D

The gentle whisper of the wind could be felt
Awakening all to the coming storm.

Leaves from the strand of the forest red gums
Rattled and crashed as its force increased
Tiny buds broke free as well
Not knowing where they would fall.

The birds crouched low - gripping their claws
Whilst the forest red gum collars, discovered ants madly scurrying
within:
They, like the spiders had to find escape and protection.

The suffering to come would bring fresh joy,
For as drops of rain like tears began to fall
Many leaves suddenly left their home
And blew with the strengthening wind.

They gathered together in clumps
Ready now, to begin life anew.

The glorious trees, birds and creatures
Had been refreshed,

Whilst the gathering of the eucalyptus leaves
Brought the needed change to feed them still.



The Forest Red Gum
by Lynette L

Towering torso with lanky limbs
Tapering fingers stretching far and wide
The Forest Red Gum stands majestically
Grounded to the earth, the source of its
survival.

A true survivor of this ancient earth
adaptable and versatile,
The patriarch of the family cluster.
Shedding its skin to smooth the way for
new beginnings.



RED BLOODWOOD
by Terry C

Sharp and fragrant eucalyptus
The smell of my childhood
No more store bought flowers
The city far behind.
A shack, no comforts
Life hard, challenging
A poor child, hurt and
 changing
Welcomed to the embrace
of home
The red gum tips
my mother's on floral hope
Draw me in, give me
courage
A memory for a lifetime.

Untitled
by Jan M

Too much fruit
Too many leaves
Too many branches
Follow that branch to the end of a leaf
Drop off
Dislodge the fruit
Drop off
And lightly fall to the soil
Feel the stirring of roots
They can't move
 (my mind tells me)
But I feel them bumping up
Look out
They might break through and swallow
those tiny, tiny, tiny tender fruit
Damage these graceful 'swords' and 'sickles'

...



On Forest Red Gum
by Jan M

What do you think
 of our 'knowledge'
When
you just 'are.'



Alan

ALAN I STAND - JAVED BY THE LEAVE TO TRACK.
SEE THE GROUND - GAVE TO LOOK THE HILLIES
DIMPERS, CRACKS, SCARS, THE EVIDENCE
SET HERE BY THE WINDLOA THE
STAMPED SAUNES WITH TIME.

Jan

Feel the stirring of those roots
They don't move
But I feel them bumping up
Into the soil...
(my mind tells me)

Leonie

Tall with long limbs and long
tapering fingers, the Forest Red
Gum stands majestically with
its family, shading
unnecessary sun beams
for a smooth, new beginning

Lyn

MAGNETIC IRONBARK
KNOWLEDGE SEEN IN YOUR
LIMBS OF AGE SHOW
TRACKS OF WHAT YOU'VE LIVED
THE LIFE.

TERRY
CROSS 20.

Long living giving life
to others
providing shelter

Rob

Everyting - bad bones
of the Blythe lungs of silobands.
Constant spread fast INSPIRATING

The gathering of the candlelight leaves
The gentle winds whisper through
creeping all to the country floor

Wendy

Humans named Scully bark
after the work my larvae do - the
humans, the tree and my larvae are on

Cara

Corymbia

embrace the sky
with grey abandon
reaching up

Mary

You hide in the forest in a misty haze
Your callalough yet delectable my
Faded limbs hollow-homes, flow for



New Shoots poet-in-residence

Eileen Chong is a Singaporean poet, now living Sydney, Australia. *Burning Rice* (Australian Poetry, 2012) was shortlisted for the Anne Elder Award, Australian Arts in Asia Award and the Prime Minister's Literary Award. Her other books are *Peony* (Pitt Street Poetry, 2014) and *Painting Red Orchids* (Pitt Street Poetry, 2016).

The Red Room Company's vision is to make poetry a meaningful part of everyday life. We create poetic arts projects and learning programs in collaboration with a spectrum of poets, schools, communities and partners for positive social impact. Our mission is to make poetry accessible to all, especially those who face the greatest barriers to creative opportunities.

Established in 1993 Bundanon Trust supports arts practice and engagement with the arts through its residency, education, exhibition and performance programs. In preserving the natural and cultural heritage of its site Bundanon promotes the value of landscape in all our lives.

The Bjarne K Dahl Trust focuses on eucalypts, an Australian icon and a significant aspect of Australia's natural environment and biodiversity. We envisage a public inspired by and appreciative of eucalypts.

Shoalhaven University of the Third Age (U3A) is part of an international movement which promotes and practices lifelong learning by providing low cost educational opportunities for retired people in a relaxed and informal environment. No prior educational qualifications are required; no degrees are awarded.

Find out more about their Eucalyptus Eco Poetry Project <http://redroomcompany.org/education/projects/university-third-age/>



BUNDANON TRUST



New Shoots: poetry inspired by plants