



Australian Government
Australian National Botanic Gardens

MEDIA RELEASE

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Trees shed their skin at Botanic Gardens

Crunch, crunch, crunch... it is the characteristic sound underfoot that signals the heat of an Aussie summer in the bush capital.

The annual shedding of the bark by eucalypts and related trees is nowhere more evident than at the Australian National Botanic Gardens this month.

“This is one of my favourite times in the Gardens when so many kinds of gum trees are shedding their bark,” says David Taylor, Gardens’ horticultural manager. “While everyone is familiar with the leaves of northern hemisphere trees changing colour and falling in autumn, the shedding of our native trees’ bark in summer is possibly a more subtle, but no less spectacular yearly event.

“The bark of the blue gums peels in papery strips from the trunk revealing mottled patches of a fresh cinnamon colour. The patterns are like paintings with interesting and unexpected combinations of colour, and are different each year.

“Other gums, like our local brittle gum *Eucalyptus mannifera*, turn an intense pink colour before they peel and expose a creamy colour that soon changes to the classic white trunk.”

There are more than 700 species of eucalypts, but their bark types fall into roughly two categories – the persistent rough type of stringybarks, boxes, peppermints and ironbarks and shedding smooth type like brittle gums and scribbly gums.

“It’s the smooth ones that shed either all or some of their bark. You can tell the bark will soon begin to peel because the western side of the tree changes colour first,” David said.

“People can use trunks of these trees as features in their own gardens, and the peeled bark makes great mulch to retain water in garden beds.”

Other summer highlights in the Gardens include the stunning red and orange flowers blooming on the *Eucalyptus* ‘Wildfire’ and *Eucalyptus ficifolia* ‘dwarf orange’, the kangaroo paws in flower, and the intensely red flowers of the Sturt’s desert pea display.

For further information about the Australian National Botanic Gardens visit www.anbg.gov.au/anbg

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