

U3A Port Fairy  
Science...naturally!  
**Trees of Port Fairy – Self-guided walk**

John Miller April 2020

This is the fifth in a series of self-guided walks around Port Fairy to help relieve the tedium of COVID-19. The aim of the walks is to provide enjoyable outdoor activities that can be undertaken either by yourself or your family (with appropriate COVID-19 separation and other precautions). I hope you enjoy them.

This walk is a bit different to the previous walks as it concentrates only on the trees, most of which are introduced, that can be seen in the streets, or adjacent gardens, of Port Fairy.

### Directions

Most of the walk is on formed footpaths and is suitable for all mobilities.

Start the walk at the Star of the West Hotel on the corner of Sackville and Bank Street and head north to Regent Street then up Regent Street all the way to the Princes Highway where you turn south (left) and walk to Cox Street. Turn east (left) into Cox Street then south (right) into Corbet Street and east (left) at Campbell Street. Walk east to Sackville Street, then north and back to the Star of the West where you started. It will probably take about 1 hour at a leisurely pace. A map is provided on the last page.

Star by walking north along Sackville Street



The large tree on the east side near the SES compound is the conifer *Cypress Hesperocyparis* (formerly *Cupressus*) *macrocarpa*. It goes by a number of common names including Monterey Cypress. It has been planted as wind breaks throughout western Victoria but is now under threat from the fatal fungal Cypress Canker *Seiridium* species. Its natural habitat is just a very small area of the Monterey Peninsula south of San Francisco, US.



A lovely large Blackwood *Acacia melanoxylon* can be seen towering over the hedge of No. 90. Blackwood is a native tree and very common throughout southern Victoria. It is one of the few local native, and probably naturally occurring, trees to be found in Port Fairy.

As you reach the intersection with Regent Street you will see a copse of Swamp Gums *Eucalyptus ovata* at the start of the Rail Trail.



Turn left (west) into Regent Street.



Walk along the grassy verge for about 30 m and take a short diversion down Church Street to see the wonderful Pepper Tree *Schinus molle* on the left with its swollen trunk and cluster of branches. It looks a little like an odd Boab tree.

This tough and resilient tree, a native to the more arid regions of central South America, has been planted widely in Victoria. It is now a bit of a pest in some locations.

Return to Regent Street and continue west.



A large Drooping Sheoak *Allocasuarina verticillata*, can be seen just the west Whalers Drive. This specimen has been planted but it is native to Victoria and is widespread along the coast and drier areas of central Victoria.

The tall palm just after the intersection with James Street is a beautiful specimen of a Fan Palm *Washingtonia filifera*.

Washingtonias can be identified by the fan-shaped leaves, retained old fronds and rough trunk.



A Western Australian Red Flowering Gum *Corymbia ficifolia* is growing in a front yard on the western side of the Grant Street intersection. *Corymbia* species are very similar to eucalypts but, amongst other anatomical differences, do not have the characteristic “eucalyptus” smell when the leaves are crushed. The Red Flowering Gum is fairly easy to identify from its very large woody urn-shaped seed capsules (gumnuts) and of course the beautiful bright red flowers. Its natural distribution is confined to sandy soil in low forests south-east of Perth but has been widely planted as a street tree.

Walk on to William Street.



William Street Norfolk Island Pines leaves

Where would we be without “our” Norfolk Island Pines *Araucaria heterophylla*. They are endemic to Norfolk Island but have been widely planted in coastal areas. They are not really a pine trees, but they are conifers. The small male cones, about half the size of your little finger, are born on the end of branchlets and produce the pollen and the larger and more obvious female cones, once fertilised by the pollen, produce the seeds.



Female cone with





A bit further along Regent Street you will see an English Yew *Taxus baccata* in the front garden of No. 71. They are native to Europe and north Africa. Yews are also conifers but instead of a hard, woody cone they have a small reddish fleshy “cone”. The needles are flattened and dark green on top and a lighter green underneath – the brown discolouration indicates that this specimen is under a bit of stress – maybe from our couple of very hot days last summer. Beware – all parts of the plant are poisonous.

Walk on to the highway and turn left (south).



The small rounded trees lining the highway are Kanooka or Water Gums *Tristaniopsis laurina* – a native to the east coast of Australia forests from Brisbane to around Bairnsdale. It is a member of the *Myrtaceae* family, which includes eucalypts, and you can see the similarities if you look closely at the leaves and nuts.



As you are walking south along the footpath look up over the top of the hedge where you will see a slightly moth-eaten Maidenhair Tree *Ginkgo biloba* – a real odd-ball of the plant world. Ginkgos are sort-of gymnosperms, along with conifers, cycads and another strange group of plants in the *gnetophyta*...but not completely. It's really in a group of its own. The trees, which are now thought to be only known in the wild from two small areas in China, are either male or female. There is also some suggestion that germination of the seeds requires a trip through the digestive tract of a dinosaur, which means it is a stranded species and now propagates mainly via cuttings. Further reading about this strange species is highly recommended.



A bit further on, again look east and upwards and you will see two very tall skinny palms towering over the private conservatory. Their exact identity remains a mystery, but they could be the Cabbage Fan-palm *Livistona australis*, a native confined to the margin of a few creeks in the Orbost region of East Gippsland.

A short detour into Bank Street yields another Australian native well out of its natural range – White Cedar *Melia azedarach* which makes a nice street tree but can become a pest in dryer climates.



Return to the highway and walk on the eastern footpath south towards Cox Street.



Cox Street is lined with New Zealand Christmas Trees or the Maori **pohutukawa**, *Metrosideros excelsa*. Known for their lovely show of flowers, comprised of red stamens, around Christmas,



it is a very hardy native of New Zealand and is also a member of the *Myrtaceae* family like the Kanooka.

Walk down Cox Street and turn right into Corbett Street. Some of the trees you will see along Corbett Street include a row of Robinia *Robinia pseudoacacia*, Pencil Pines *Cupressus sempervirens*, Canary Island Date Palm *Phoenix canariensis* with its brutal spines at the base of the fronds and the widely planted Western Australian native Willow-myrtle *Agonis flexuosa*. All are very hardy species and grow well in the Port Fairy environment.



*Robinia*



*Pencil Pines*



*Canary Island Palm*



*Agonis*

Turn left into Campbell Street and walk to Sackville Street. How many of the trees that you have already identified can you see along this part of the walk?



Turn up Sackville Street and back to the start at the Star of the West.

But keep your eye out for the magnificent Moreton Bay Fig *Ficus macrophylla* in the front yard of Hanley House. It occurs naturally from Bundaberg in Queensland south to around Nowra on the south coast of New South Wales. Another very hardy tree which has been widely planted and some magnificent specimens can be seen in the public gardens of Melbourne.

There are many more trees and other good stuff to discover along the walk so take your time.

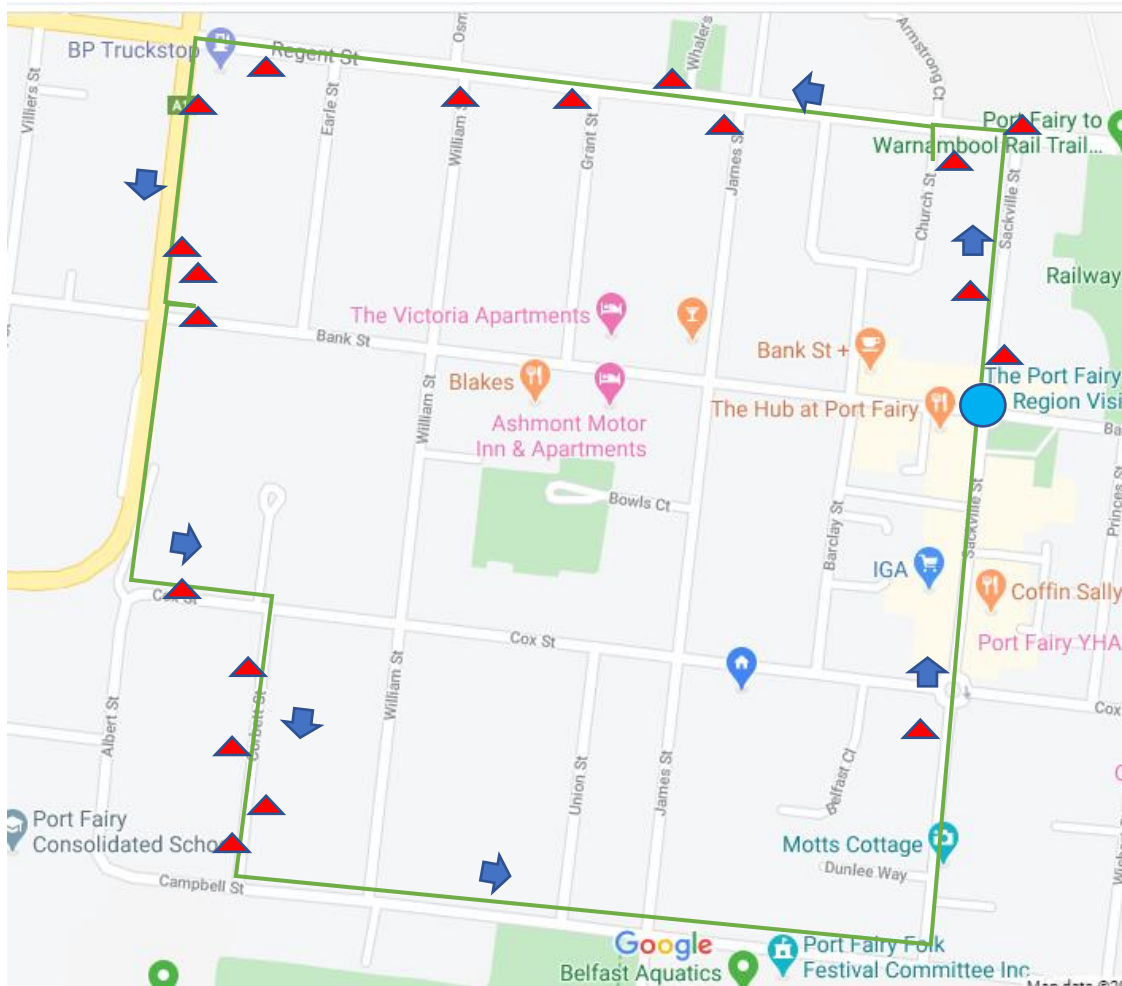
If you find a tree or other plant, bird, whatever, and want to know what it is, email me a picture and a short description and I will endeavour to work it out for you.  
**[jmiller3350@gmail.com](mailto:jmiller3350@gmail.com)**

Please feel free to share this with anyone else who might enjoy the walk.



# Trees of Port Fairy – Self-guided walk

## Route map and approximate tree locations



### Legend

- Start and finish
- ➡ Walking direction
- ▲ Tree location