

In the *Calgaroo* last year Lesley Waite introduced us to the idea of looking at plant communities rather than just individual plants when we walk in the bush. It is very easy to marvel at particularly spectacular or delicate plants when walking in the bush - and there are certainly many plants which are worth paying attention to around Sydney. It is important to note the conditions and aspect of where they are growing. Last Sunday I led a walk in the Darling Mills Valley and at one stage the transition from Angophora dominated woodland to Peppermint dominated woodland is so stark it is as though someone has drawn a boundary line on the ground.

These are considerations which I have found to be most important in planning the walks and the commentaries which I do for the Baulkham Hills Council Walks program and for other groups. Members of the general public do not necessarily want to know the names of every plant which is growing along a track but they are interested in the vegetation communities and where these communities occur.

One of the most common communities in The Hills District is the **Sandstone Gully Open Forest**. Features of this forest are Blackbutts (*Eucalyptus pilularis*), Sydney Peppermint (*Eucalyptus piperita*), Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*), Red Bloodwood (*Corymbia gummifera*), and Black She Oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*). This forest has an understorey of Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*), *Epacris pulchella*, *Hakea sericea*, *Grevillea linarifolia* and *Xanthorrhoea*. Good places to see these communities are Fred Caterson Reserve and Bidjigal Reserve,

Also relatively common is **Sydney Sandstone Ridgetop Woodland** which is found on the drier parts of the sandstone country such as ridgetops and north facing slopes with drier soils. Features of these communities include Red Bloodwoods (*Corymbia gummifera*), Stringbarks (*Eucalyptus sparsifolia*), Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus haemostoma*), Sydney Peppermint (*Eucalyptus piperita*), and *Angophora bakeri*. The understorey includes *Leptospermum trinervium*, Mountain Devil (*Lambertia formosa*), *Banksia spinulosa* and *Ispogon anemonifolius*. This community can be seen in Bidjigal Reserve and Fred Caterson Reserve.

Another community which is well represented in Council reserves is **Turpentine Ironbark Forest**. The dominant trees are *Syncarpia glomulifera* and *Allocasuarina torulosa*. The understorey is *Leucopogon juniperinus*, *Themeda australis*, *Lomandra longifolia* and *Hardenbergia violacea*. This vegetation community used to be very common on Sydney's shale capped ridges. Now it has almost disappeared and houses and neat gardens flourish in its place. The small pockets which remain are treasured and protected. Places to see it are Ted Horwood Reserve, Baulkham Hills, Eric Mobbs Reserve, Castle Hill, Hunts Creek Reserve at Carlingford and Sophia Doyle Reserve on Toongabbie Creek at Baulkham Hills.

Other Communities include **Blue Gum High Forest**, (Richard Webb Reserve West Pennant Hills and Hunts Creek Carlingford), **Sydney Sandstone Scrub** ( Bidjigal Reserve and Bill Woods Reserve Glenhaven) and **Closed Rainforest** (Bidjigal Reserve).