

JR FACT FILE

BORN TO EXPLORE



MOUNTAIN ASH

Eucalyptus regnans

FASCINATING FACT: THE MOUNTAIN ASH IS THE WORLD'S TALLEST FLOWERING PLANT.



AT A GLANCE

Size:

The Mountain Ash is the world's tallest flowering plant and can reach heights of up to 150 metres. However generally they only reach 100 metres. Girth size can exceed 15 metres at the base.

Distribution:

Tall open forests within Victoria and Tasmania.

What Is a Mountain Ash?

The Mountain Ash is a dominant feature of the tall forests in Victoria. It is the world's tallest flowering plant, growing rapidly at a rate of 1 metre per year to reach heights of 100 metres, although the tallest individual ever recorded reached 140 metres. The only other species that comes a close second in height is the Californian Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*).

The buttresses (base) of the Mountain Ash can be more than 15 metres in circumference. Whilst it can boast about its size, it can't boast of being a good

climbing tree -the lowest branches usually begin 30 metres off the ground. That's quite a jump for anyone!

The tall trunk is smooth except for the lower few metres where rough bark is retained. Long ribbons of bark can be seen dangling from higher up on the tree. The trunk is white or grey in colour. White flowers appear from January – March.

Mountain Ash can live for up to 500 years. Other than old age, wildfire is the only other common cause of death in Mountain Ash. Characteristics that cause this tree to be fire sensitive include the long ribbons of hanging bark and the extreme combustibility of the foliage. After a fire, the area will regenerate to Mountain Ash as the burnt ground and direct sunlight serves as an ideal seed bed for seed that falls from the scorched crowns.

The *Eucalyptus regnans* is an important timber tree and is widely used in building and in the paper industry. In Australia, timber is harvested from both natural and cultivated stands.

Where Do Mountain Ash Grow?

The species is native to wet sclerophyll forests (tall open forests) thriving on wet, south-facing sheltered mountain slopes, and gullies in high rainfall areas including the Dandenong Ranges National Park, east of Melbourne, the Great Otway National Park, the Gippsland Forests in eastern Victoria and north-eastern and southern Tasmania.

Other Interesting Facts about the Mountain Ash:

The Mountain Ash creates a shady canopy for a number of other native plants including Soft and Rough Tree Ferns and various wattle species. Numerous species of mammals, birds and reptiles inhabit Mountain Ash forest, as it provides nectar and seeds, nesting and roosting sites.

Want to Know More?

www.museum.vic.gov.au/forest/plants/ash.html

www.dse.vic.gov.au
(search: Mountain Ash)