



Trees of Williamstown Botanic Gardens

Botanical Name: *Ficus macrophylla*

Common Name: Moreton Bay Fig

Origin: New South Wales and Queensland



Ficus is an evergreen or occasionally a deciduous tree, shrub or climber, generally with milky sap (of unknown function) and sometimes with well developed aerial roots. The flowers are borne inside a round to oval fruit (fig), botanically known as a syconium. The fig has a hole in the tip which allows entry of pollinating, sometimes species specific wasps.

The Moreton Bay Fig is one of the most widely planted natives in Australia and overseas. Trees occur in many nineteenth century public parks and gardens, and historic gardens. A popular avenue tree in the 1850s in New South Wales and in about 1903 planted in Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra. A fine avenue of 36 trees occurs along Raglan Parade in Warrnambool and an Avenue of Honour (1920) at Drik Drik. One of the most famous Moreton Bay Figs is in Swan Hill and is known as the "Burke and Wills" tree planted in 1860, which has a girth of 11m, height of 28m and a canopy spread of 44m.

The Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens William Guilfoyle (1873-1909) encouraged their planting and regarded the Moreton Bay Fig as one of his favourite trees. Overseas, large trees occur in New Zealand (Napier), California, Italy and Teneriffe in the Canary Islands.

Moreton Bay Fig is a massive wide spreading, broad crowned evergreen tree growing to a height of 30-40m and a similar canopy spread. The trunks are often buttressed and the roots tend to grow along the surface. In damp or humid situations aerial roots form. The leaves, the main feature of the tree, are 15-25cm long by 5-10cm wide and dark glossy green above and paler and rusty coloured beneath.

Moreton Bay Figs grow naturally in subtropical rainforests from Jervis Bay to Cape York.

Ficus macrophylla subsp. *columnaris* is endemic to Lord Howe Island and has slightly smaller leaves and fruits and has a banyan habit with many aerial roots. There are two mature trees in the Sydney Botanic Gardens and a very large tree grows in the Tenerife Botanic Gardens (Canary Islands) established in 1788.