

What type of trees do koalas use?

Koalas have home ranges with many different trees in them. The different trees are like different rooms in the same house with each serving a distinct purpose.

Trees for food

Koalas are specialist leaf eaters, or folivores. They feed mostly, but not exclusively, on eucalypt leaves. They will also feed on closely related species like paperbarks (*Melaleuca*), bottlebrushes (*Callistemon*), boxes (*Lophostemon*) and bloodwoods (*Corymbia*).

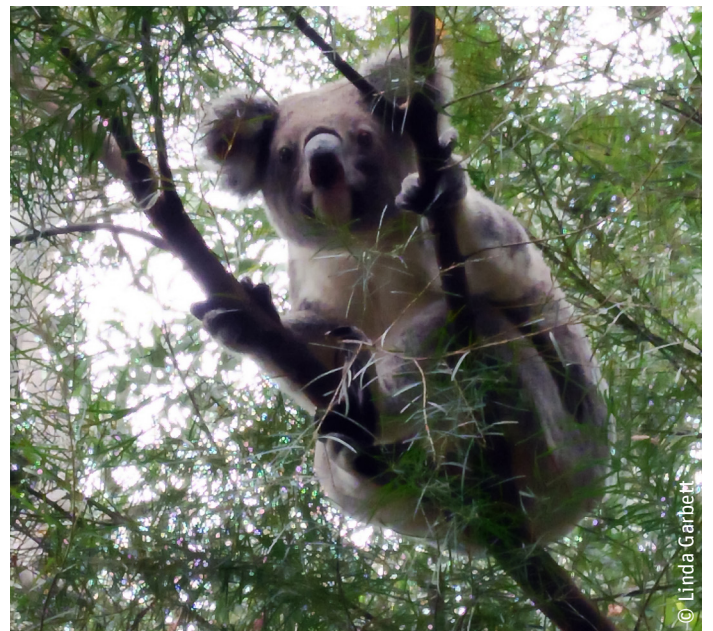
Koalas show a strong preference for the species that grow in their local area. For example, a Cleveland koala may not like ironbark leaves but they are an important food source for koalas in Sheldon, where they are common.



Koalas taking a break in local fig and wattle trees in the Redlands Coast

While koalas can feed on a range of trees, on Redlands Coast there are four preferred species of food tree.

- **Tallowood** (*Eucalyptus microcorys*) – a nice shade tree with shorter leaves than most eucalyptus and suited to most soil types.
- **Grey Gum** (*Eucalyptus propinqua*) – the spongy bark of this species makes it easy to see how frequently wildlife is using them.
- **Scribbly gum** (*Eucalyptus racemosa*) – this attractive, smooth-barked tree which can grow to 30 metres, has little scribbles on the trunk caused by moth larvae.
- **Queensland Blue Gum** (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) – the best koala food tree of all, this very large tree (to 50 metres) is fast-growing and provides habitat for many wildlife species.



If you would like a copy of our 'Know your Eucalypts' guide, visit the IndigiScapes centre to grab a copy. Or you can email indigiscapes@redland.qld.gov.au or phone us on 07 3824 8611 and we'll mail one to you.



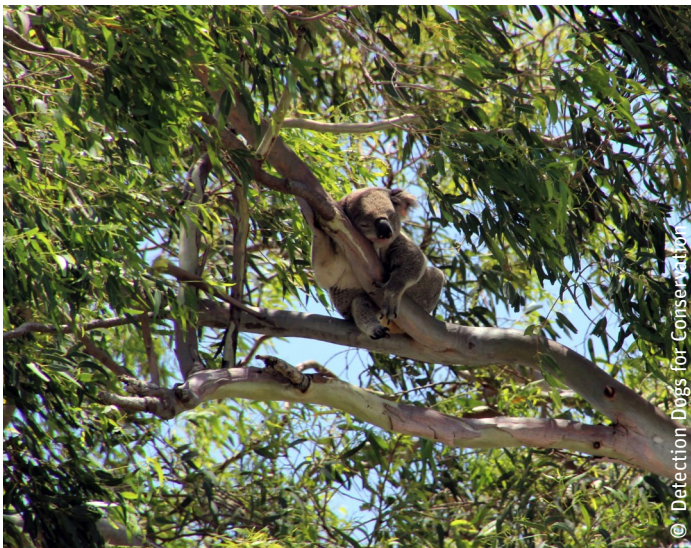
Trees for living

While eucalypts and other related species form the main part of a koala's diet, food is not the only reason koalas need trees.

Koalas use trees to protect themselves from the weather. On a cool winter morning koalas can sometimes be seen at the top of a sparse tree, catching the sun's first rays to warm up. On a hot summer day they can be difficult to locate as they seek shade in densely foliated trees. These might be natives, like figs or rainforest trees, but can even include mangos or poincianas.

Koalas have 'home ranges' rather than defined territories. Home ranges overlap and neighbouring koalas will use some of the same trees. Trees also form the boundaries of these home ranges. Within a home range koalas will often use the same trees repeatedly in preference to other trees. These are known as key trees.

Juvenile koalas will disperse from their mother's home range to establish home ranges of their own. Young males may have to travel some distance before they find a suitable area. During this trek they may use any species of tree (or fences and powerpoles) if they are threatened or feel unsafe.



How you can help

- Keep eucalypts and other native trees on your block. Even if they are not all koala food trees, they provide shelter for koalas as well as food and nesting sites for birds, possums and other wildlife. Food trees such as *Eucalyptus seeana* and *E. robusta* can be maintained at shorter heights to suit smaller backyards.
- Keep dog runs and kennels away from koala food trees and koala movement areas.
- Join your local bushcare group and help them replant and maintain koala habitat.
- Observe the movements of your 'backyard' koala to help identify and protect key trees.