

Ecological Vegetation Classes

What is an Ecological Vegetation Class?

Native vegetation in Victoria has been classified into distinctive groupings known as Ecological Vegetation Classes or EVCs. These groupings are based on floristic, structural and ecological features of the vegetation. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) have defined over 300 EVCs within Victoria. Each EVC has been assigned a distinct descriptive name (e.g. "Coast Banksia Woodland") and number (e.g. 002).

EVC maps for Bushland Reserves

In 2006 the Mornington Peninsula Shire (MPS) commissioned the Arthur Rylah Institute to map EVCs across the Peninsula. This was an enormous undertaking and resulted in what is probably the most complete and detailed EVC mapping project yet undertaken in Victoria at a Shire-wide level. EVC maps for individual bushland reserves are now being made available to Friends Groups.

EVC profiles

The Shire also commissioned Jeff Yugovic to put together a profile for each EVC that occurs on the Peninsula. These EVC profiles describe the structure of vegetation within that EVC, what sort of environment it occurs in, its bioregional conservation status, its past and present distribution and major species (all specific to the Mornington Peninsula).

What are bioregions?

EVCs are classified according to the geographic area or bioregion in which they occur. Victoria has been divided into 28 bioregions - the Mornington Peninsula occurs within the Gippsland Plains Bioregion.

What does bioregional conservation status refer to?

The bioregional conservation status of an EVC is an assessment of its conservation status within a particular bioregion based on a number of factors including how commonly it originally occurred, its current level of depletion and current level of degradation. There are 5 bioregional conservation status categories – presumed extinct (X), endangered (E), vulnerable (V), depleted (D), rare (R) and of least concern (LC).

For example, the EVC Grassy Woodland (no. 122) has a bioregional conservation status of vulnerable within the Gippsland Plains Bioregion.

Why do I need to know about EVCs?

The term EVC and other related words like bioregion are now widely used across Victoria when people are talking about vegetation. EVCs are a very useful way to describe different types of vegetation; it means everyone across Victoria is using the same system and common terminology when talking about vegetation.

Becoming familiar with the EVC maps and profiles for your area is a great starting point to help you to understand the natural environment around you.

Recognising how the composition and structure of native vegetation in your area changes and how it these changes relates to soil, topography and other features can really help you to understand the broader ecological picture of what is happening in your patch. EVC profiles can also be used a guide to help you restore a particular EVC.

Limitations

EVC are a somewhat simplified way to look at vegetation - we humans have a tendency to want to categorise the natural world into distinct units such as EVCs, but nature is not so straight forward, plants do not always arrange themselves into clear, distinct groupings.

It can be difficult for the untrained eye (and sometimes the trained one!) to discern just what EVC a certain patch of vegetation should be categorised as - especially if the vegetation is highly modified through weed infestation. But try not to get too bogged down in the finer details, there is no need to draw definitive "lines in the sand" on your site where one EVC stops and another starts (most of the time in nature there is almost always a gradual change where EVC overlap one another anyway). Just think of EVCs as a useful tool to for describing vegetation and use the maps and profiles provided by the Shire to help you to understand more about the bushland in your area.