

Karte Conservation Park

Youth Trail – Plants of the Mallee

About the trail....

The Youth Trail was constructed in 1988 by Pinnaroo Area School students as part of a Bicentennial Project. The Friends of Southern Mallee Parks adopted the trail and now help to maintain it.

Beginning in the picnic area, this trail forms a 1.5 km loop and will take about 45 minutes to complete. There are also some steep sections that require a reasonable level of fitness. The numbers on this brochure correspond to stops along the trail.

Introduction

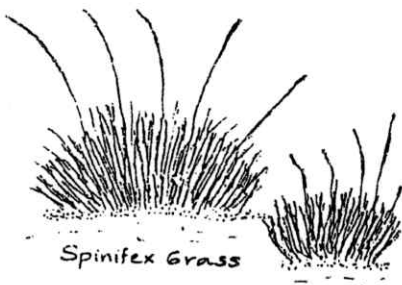
Karte Conservation Park is located 30km northwest of Pinnaroo and protects 3565 hectares of mallee vegetation.

The name Karte (pronounced car-tee) is an Aboriginal word meaning thick, low scrub. Apart from its name, there are no significant historical sites in the Park. It has had the local name of "the Dingo Ranges" for many years.

Karte experiences extreme weather conditions from hot, dry summer days above 40°C to cold winter evenings that fall below 0°C. The vegetation is well adapted to these extremes, so why not take a walk on the trail and learn a little more about the plants that live in Karte.

1 Spinifex (*Triodia scariosa*)

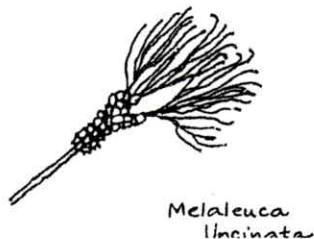
Common across Australia this plant has sharp spikes and is extremely flammable. The shape of the leaves helps to conserve water in the summer months. Spinifex grows from the outer edge while the centre slowly dies away. Really old plants form a ring or donut shape. This plant provides excellent shelter for small mammals and reptiles.



Spinifex Grass

2 Broombush (*Melaleuca uncinata*)

This location contains many *Melaleucas*, also known as broombush. These shrubs respond well to hot dry conditions. They flower in spring and produce large numbers of fine seeds, from which they readily grow. What may have made the diggings you can see at the base of these plants?



Melaleuca uncinata

3 Native Pine (*Callitris* species)

Notice several different types here by variations in colour of leaves. *Callitris* leaves have evolved to be scales, which are usually, flat against the branches. The male flower has small cylindrical pollen spikes. The female flower has small cones of six hardened scales. Can you find them?



Opened cones

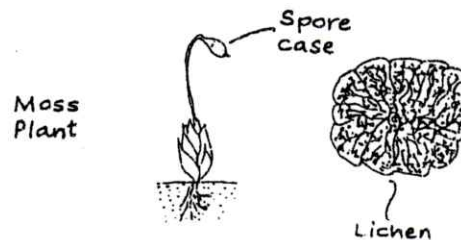
4 Rest Spot

Get a sweeping view of the surrounding countryside from this vantage point.



5 Moss and Lichen

Lichens grow on a variety of materials and in many colours including green, grey, yellow-green, orange and black. How many colours can you find? Mosses reproduce by spores carried in a capsule at the top of a stalk. Mosses are usually dormant in summer, but respond rapidly to moisture.

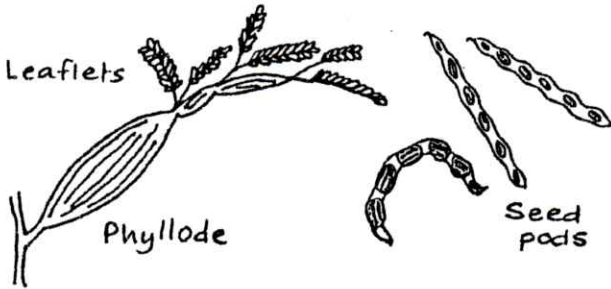


Moss Plant

Lichen

6 Wattles (*Acacia* species)

Commonly known as wattles, *Acacias* grow well on sand ridges in low rainfall areas. They conserve water by having phyllodes (pronounced fill-oads), which are flattened stems, instead of leaves. Are there seed pods on the plant?

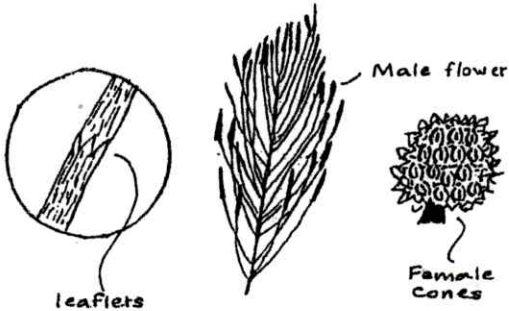


7 Rest Point

The small sandy depression clearly indicates how fragile these sandhills are once the vegetation is removed.

8 Sheoak

There are 25 species of Sheoak in Australia. Like the *Acacia*, they also have phyllodes instead of leaves. Both the male and female trees are found here - can you find them?



9 Ants and Eucalypts

Here we can see the relationship that exists between ants and *Eucalypts*. Numerous ant nests indicates the ready availability of seeds that fall beneath the trees.

10 Quandong (native peach)

Fruit from this particular species is bitter and poisonous, but some species have 'edible' fruit, which is used in desserts and jams. Quandong trees are root parasitic, which means they need a host plant to start growing. Can you find any old kernels beneath the tree?



11 Erosion

Here you will notice the effects of erosion, and a small shrub that holds the ground together with its roots. What causes erosion?

12 Pink Velvet Bush (*Lasiopetalum behrii*)

This shrub grows to 1 metre and flowers from late winter to early spring. The flowers are star-shaped and are pink on the inside and white and woolly on the outside. Notice the water erosion in the gully nearby. Plant roots play a vital role in preventing excessive erosion.

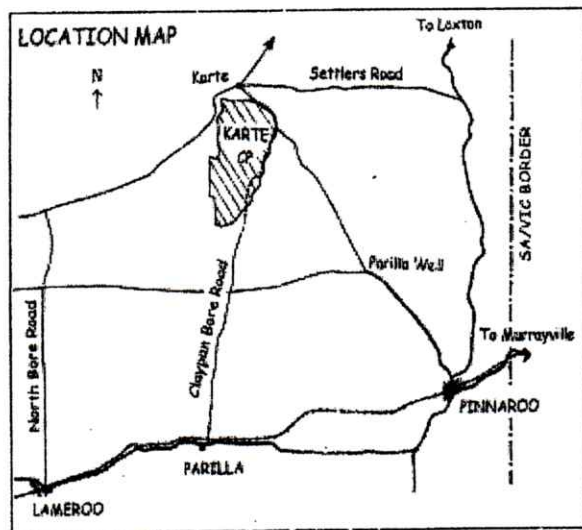
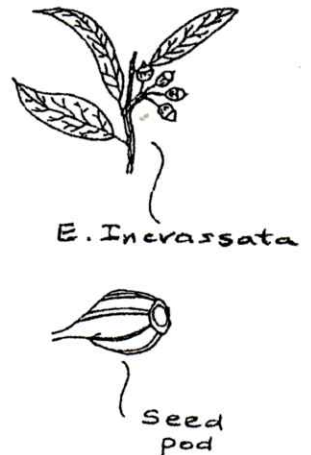
13 Rest Spot

Rest on the seat provided and carefully listen for bird calls. If you're very quiet and keep still you may even see some birds. Can you identify them?

14 Mallee

A mallee is a small slender *Eucalypt* usually with several stems growing from a large common root (lignotuber). There are 6 different species in Karte, with the most common being the ridge-fruited mallee (*Eucalyptus incrassata*).

The leaf canopy forms an umbrella-shaped structure, which collects as much rainfall as possible. Mallee lignotubers can survive for up to 1000 years. The lignotubers enable mallee trees to regenerate quickly after fire or other disasters. Can you find evidence of regrowth?



This brochure is an update of the original produced by PAS students in 1988.

