

## Bluegum Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*)



### History:

Bluegum eucalyptus, also known as Tasmanian bluegum, is an exotic tree native to Australia, but is now a very prevalent part of the Bay Area landscape (UCANR n.d.). The bluegum, along with other species of eucalyptus, was introduced to San Francisco during the eucalyptus “boom” of the 1870s. Widespread eucalyptus plantings were encouraged at the time for a variety of reasons, including beautification, timber, and windbreaks. The 1906 earthquake fueled the need for timber, greatly increasing eucalyptus plantings (NPS 2006).

The bluegum and its counterparts were desirable at the time due to their ability to adapt quickly and grow in very dry regions (UCANR n.d.). However, in the decades following their introduction, people began to realize that eucalyptus was a poor lumber resource. Plantations soon went abandoned, and people’s attitudes shifted, now seeing eucalyptus trees as a nuisance for the same reason they were initially desired (UCANR n.d.).

### Summary:

The bluegum eucalyptus is a fast-growing tree, often recorded reaching heights of over 50 feet in under 15 years (Skolmen and Ledig n.d.). On average, they grow 98 to 180 feet tall, but can reach heights of about 260 feet in California (NPS 2006). They have great climatic adaptability, but the most successful introductions have been to locations with mild, temperate climates (Skolmen and Ledig n.d.).

The bluegum’s range in California extends from Humboldt County to San Diego County, with best growth in the coastal fog belt around San Francisco (Skolmen and Ledig n.d.). Bluegum eucalyptus can grow in a range of soils, but requires good drainage, low salinity, and sufficient depth. In California, the trees grow best in deep alluvial soils due to the greater moisture supply (Skolmen and Ledig n.d.).



Today, eucalyptus trees have become an integral part of Bay Area ecosystems, providing habitat for many native species. Despite this, they still have documented impacts on microclimates, decrease light availability, and inhibit the growth of understory vegetation. These factors contribute to their designation as an invasive species (UCANR n.d.).



### Bluegum Eucalyptus and Fire

In California, bluegum eucalyptus are considered highly susceptible to fire, especially when in large stands. The bark readily carries fire to the crown, and the leaves contain oils that produce a hotter flame when burned (Skolmen and Ledig n.d.). Eucalyptus trees produce a lot of embers and therefore have great potential to ignite spot fires, often over long distances

(Skolmen and Ledig n.d.). In addition to the flammable oils, the bark on bluegum eucalyptus trees is deciduous, meaning it is constantly shedding. It is the accumulation of dead, dry, oily leaves and bark that is dangerously flammable, especially when debris is stuck in the canopy (NPS 2006).

While bluegum eucalyptus is very hazardous in large stands, you do not need to panic at the presence of a few trees. The main thing you need to worry about is the hazardous fuels the trees drop, like the dry leaves and bark mentioned above, and any other potential ladder fuels. If you keep the bases clean, limb up the branches at least 1/3 of the tree's height, and remove the peeling bark, bluegum eucalyptus and its counterparts can be relatively fire-resistant (City of San Rafael 2022).

### References:

- City of San Rafael. 2022. "My Neighbor Has a Eucalyptus Tree, and It Is an Extreme Fire Hazard." Cityofsanrafael.org. The City of San Rafael. 2022. <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/question/my-neighbor-has-a-eucalyptus-tree-and-it-is-an-extreme-fire-hazard-how-can-i-make-them-remove-it/#/city/answers/vegetation-management/my-neighbor-has-a-eucalyptus-tree-and-it-is-an-extreme-fire-hazard-how-can-i-make-them-remove-it>.
- NPS. 2006. "Eucalyptus." Nps.gov. National Park Service. [https://www.nps.gov/pore/learn/nature/upload/firemanagement\\_fireeducation\\_newsletter\\_eucalyptus.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/pore/learn/nature/upload/firemanagement_fireeducation_newsletter_eucalyptus.pdf).
- Skolmen, Roger G., and F. Thomas Ledig. n.d. "Bluegum Eucalyptus." Usda.gov. US Department of Agriculture . Accessed April 6, 2026. [https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag\\_654/volume\\_2/eucalyptus/globulus.htm](https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag_654/volume_2/eucalyptus/globulus.htm).
- UCANR. n.d. "Eucalyptus in California ." Igor's Urban Website! UC Agriculture and Natural Resources. Accessed April 8, 2026. <https://ucanr.edu/site/igors-urban-website/eucalyptus-california>.

Photos: Australian Plant Image Index; Adelaide Parklands Association; UCANR