

## Tasmanian Oak and Victorian Ash (part 1)

This is a 2 part description, first part general comments and one tree profile,. The second part contains two tree profiles.

Tasmanian oak is the name used for three almost identical species of eucalypt hardwoods that are marketed collectively. *Eucalyptus delegatensis* (Alpine Ash) occurs at higher altitudes, while *E. regnans* (Mountain Ash) is found in wetter sites; *E. obliqua* (Messmate) has a wide distribution, occurring in wet forests but also extending into drier areas.

Tasmanian oak is the preferred hardwood for a wide range of applications. It works extremely well and produces an excellent finish. It can be used in all forms of construction and in interior applications such as panelling and flooring. It can be glue-laminated to cover long spans. Veneers, plywood and engineered products are also available. It is also a popular furniture timber, and its fiber is sought after for reconstituted board and production of high quality paper.

Tasmanian oak is recognised for its excellent staining qualities, which allow ready matching with other timbers, finishes or furnishings.

Property	Alpine Ash	Mountain Ash	Messmate
Green density	1050 kg/m <sup>3</sup>	1030 kg/m <sup>3</sup>	1080 kg/m <sup>3</sup>
Air dry Density	620 kg/m <sup>3</sup>	680 kg/m <sup>3</sup>	780 kg/m <sup>3</sup>
Heartwood	Pale pink or pale yellowish brown	Pale pink or pale straw	Pale brown
Grain	Usually straight but sometimes with fiddle back	Straight but sometimes with fiddle back	Sometimes interlocked
Drying	Care needed, prone to collapse and internal and surface checking on the tangential surface. Reconditioning recommended	Considerable collapse occurs so reconditioning recommended	Slow in drying and likely to check. Some collapse
Steam bending	Yes	Yes	Yes
Glues	well	satisfactorily	well
Shrinkage - radial	4.5%	6.5%	3.5%
Shrinkage - tangential	8%	13%	6.5%

Victorian ash does not include Messmate, consequently there is more consistency in the colour mix. Importantly, it should also be noted that unlike Victorian ash, Tasmanian oak is susceptible to lyctid borer.

## Alpine Ash - *Eucalyptus delegatensis*.



One of my favourite trees. It is readily distinguishable due its large leaf size and shape. It is one of the 10 tallest trees in the world.

Grows from Southern NSW and ACT (Brindabella Ranges) to Tasmania.

It is also known as gum-topped stringybark, white-top and in Victoria as woollybutt. It has a straight trunk with rough, fibrous to stringy bark on the lower half of the trunk, smooth white bark above, lance-shaped to curved adult leaves, flower buds in groups of between seven and fifteen, white flowers and barrel-shaped or hemispherical fruit.

It was first formally described in 1900 by Richard Thomas Baker from a specimen collected by William Baeuerlen, (previously known as Wilhelm Bäuerlen) on "Delegate Mountain".

Commonly forms pure stands. In New South Wales and the [Australian Capital Territory](#) and in Victoria it occurs at altitudes between 900 and 1,500m.

It is a tree that typically grows to a height of 40–50m, sometimes to 90m, and forms a lignotuber. The bark is rough, grey to black, fibrous or stringy on the lower half of the trunk, smooth white to greyish above. Adult leaves are lance-shaped to curved, the same glossy green to bluish green on both sides, 75–230mm long and 13–55mm wide. Mature buds are oval to club-shaped, green to yellow or red, 4–5mm long and wide with a conical or rounded operculum with a small point on the tip. Flowering occurs between December and March and the flowers are white.

The seed requires a significant cold period for it to germinate.

Alpine and Mountain Ash forest stands are called Stand replacing event forest. The natural event is a Crown Fire.



Flowers and adult leaves



## Capsules/Fruit

Stand replacing event forests worldwide have similar characteristics. The overstory is dominated by one species and tends to be even aged. Silvicultural practices need to mimic nature to get the best results.

In NSW, the Silviculture practice is the use of Australian Group Selection technique. In Victoria and Tasmania they use clearfelling or clearfelling with patch retention. Victoria and Tasmania will often supplement the natural regrowth with aerial seeding.

If the interval between Crown fires is too short (less than 25 years), the trees are not mature enough to have set sufficient seed to restock the area, then the species (in particular Mountain Ash less so for Alpine Ash as it forms lignotubers) lost to the area for a considerable time. This has occurred in parts of Kosciuszko and Victorian National Parks. They require proactive fire management or the species is lost to area for a number of centuries.



Examples of Alpine Ash furniture (side table and wooden bath)

The Pilot Hill sawmill south of Batlow use to make boat oars, in particular for the Surf Life Saving Clubs. Now it produces fitches that are exported to Malaysia and Singapore where they are veneered and made into doors. Many of these doors are for the Australian Market.