

PLATEAU HARDWOOD FOREST

The Norfolk Island Vegetation Mapping Project has described and mapped 14 distinct native plant communities on Norfolk Island. This series of fact sheets presents information about each of the communities.

Plateau Hardwood Forest

Mixed hardwood forest found on flat areas at Steeles Point and Anson Bay.

This community is the most widespread forest on the lower parts of the island and is found on level ground in the Steeles Point and Duncombe Bay area, but was probably once widespread including through burnt pine.

It is the drier version of the Upland Hardwood Forest. Norfolk Island pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*) may have been rather uncommon in this forest in the past.

Old and naturally occurring birdcatcher tree (*Pisonia brunoniana*) occurs in several places and may be indicative of this forest type. Originally, the understorey may have been quite open in places, supporting the shrub Norfolk evergreen (*Alyxia gynopogon*) and the hardier ferns.

White oak (*Lagunaria patersonia*) is a commonly occurring, large and spectacular tree growing to more than 20 metres. Its pink- and mauve-coloured flowers fade to white with age and have a waxy texture. The seed pods contain sharp hairs that can irritate the skin.



Plateau Hardwood Forest on private land at Steeles Point. Photo: Kevin Mills

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Plant community	Key species	Other species	Threatened species
Plateau Hardwood Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maple (<i>Elaeodendron curtispindula</i>) • White oak (<i>Lagunaria patersonia</i>) • Ironwood (<i>Nestegis apetala</i>) • Bloodwood (<i>Baloghia inophylla</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norfolk evergreen (<i>Alyxia gynopogon</i>) • Sharkwood (<i>Dysoxylon bijugum</i>) • Beech (<i>Myrsine ralstoniae</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharkwood (<i>Dysoxylon bijugum</i>) • Beech (<i>Myrsine ralstoniae</i>) • Melicytus (<i>Melicytus latifolius</i>)

Indicative species composition

The table above identifies the key species present (those species that are most characteristic of the plant community), other species (additional species that are likely to be present and assist in defining the community), and some of the threatened species present.

Further information

These fact sheets are based on the Norfolk Island Vegetation Mapping Project conducted by the Invasive Species Council between 2018 and 2020. Naomi Christian and Dr Kevin Mills conducted the vegetation surveys, and described and mapped the native plant communities. Two maps were produced – one showing the estimated distribution of native plant communities in 1750, and one showing their distribution in 2020.

The plant community maps are available at:

- www.norfolkisland.gov.nf/services/waste-and-environment/native-vegetation/native-vegetation-mapping-project
- www.invasives.org.au/niveg

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There are 180 native plant species on the Norfolk Island Group, of which around 25% are endemic. Forty-six species have been identified as threatened with extinction. Describing and mapping the 14 native plant communities was done to help land managers protect and restore habitat for these threatened species and other wildlife of Norfolk Island.