The National Arboretum Canberra is a living collection of trees for scientific, conservation, education and research purposes. Over 44,000 rare, endangered and symbolic trees are growing across the 250 hectare site.
Dairy Farmers Hill Circuit
2km. Allow 1 hour return. Moderate.
The circuit traverses nine forests and may be followed in either direction, but an anti-clockwise route is suggested starting at the trail head sign at the southern end of the main car park.

Camden white gums (Forest 30), a threatened Australian eucalypt tree, native to the Nepean River in New South Wales. The local indigenous people called it ‘dturrum-by-ang’. Moroccan cypress and Tarout (40) are both Critically Endangered trees. Only about 230 naturally-occurring trees Tarout (Saharan cypress) are known to exist. The South esk pine (48), native to Tasmania, is listed as vulnerable and a recovery program is now underway.

Jelly palm (59) is a useful tree, native to Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina – the seeds are rich in edible oil and the fruits are edible. The large trees on top of Dairy Farmers Hill are Radiata pine (60), survivors of the 2001 and 2003 bushfires. Also at the top of Dairy Farmers Hill grow seven Alleppo pine trees, grown from seed of the commemorative Lone Pine at the Australian War Memorial. Learn more from the plaque on Dairy Farmers Hill.

Walking downhill from Dairy Farmers Hill takes you through Forest 61, a special forest where 102 Turkish pines commemorate the 102,814 Australian service personnel who have sacrificed their lives while serving with Australian units in conflicts from 1860 to 2010. Forest 50, the Canary madrone or Strawberry tree is native to the cloud forests of the Canary Islands and is listed as vulnerable. The Purple-leaved smokebush (49) flowers appear like puffs of smoke in summer. Overlooking the Events Terrace, the Mediterranean red bud (31) is a small tree of many colours and shapes, with abundant deep-pink pea-flowers, heart-shaped leaves and bright red ripening pods.

STEP Circuit
700m return. Allow 30 minutes return. Easy.
This easy walk starts near Pod Playground, goes through the Mesa oaks and past the Buchan blue wattles to the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP, Forest 20), a regional botanic garden.

The Mesa oak (Forest 21) is now the rarest North American oak and listed as vulnerable. The Buchan blue wattle (13) is a threatened Australian species native to Gippsland in Victoria. STEP (20) is a regional botanic garden with a rich variety of eucalypt trees, shrubs and grasses native to the local area, the Southern Tablelands.

Himalayan Cedar Trail
2.2km return. Allow 1 hour return. Moderate.
Starting near Pod Playground, the trail winds through five forests, including the Mesa oaks (21), past the Buchan blue wattles (13) and Wide Brown Land sculpture to the majestic Himalayan cedar forest.

Known for its spectacular autumn show of purples, reds and golds, the Persian ironwood (14) is native to Iran. The Chinese tulip tree (9) has an attractive leaf shape and is covered in large, cup-shaped green and cream flowers in late spring to early summer. The Californian fan palm (10) was a valuable food source for the Cahuilla tribe.

The three words in the Wide Brown Land sculpture come from the iconic poem ‘My Country’, written by Australian poet Dorothea Mackellar when she was 22 years old, living in England and homesick for Australia. The sculpture’s form and style were inspired by Mackellar’s handwriting. Enjoy the picnic deck with free electric barbeques nestled among the Himalayan cedars (11), known as “timber of the Gods”. Return the same way or continue along the trail to the Cork oak forest (1).

Cork Oak Trail
From Cork oaks car park. 800m return. Allow 25 minutes. Easy.
From Himalayan cedars picnic deck. 1.3kms return. Allow 40 minutes. Moderate.
Start this walk at the Himalayan cedars picnic deck (moderate) or the Cork oaks car park (easy).

From the Himalayan cedars picnic deck, the trail descends through the Persian silk trees (6), known for their fine pink and white flowers, resembling silk threads. This part of the trail is steep in places. Meander through the five different cultivars of Common fig (3), a food crop that pre-dates wheat and oats by about 1000 years. The spectacular Horse chestnut (4) is named for the horseshoe nail pattern seen on the leaf scars. Its white flower with pink-red dots is the symbol of Kiev, capital of Ukraine.

The Cork oak forest is a 150 metre walk from the Cork oaks car park, through Forest 2, a mix of eucalypts, shrubs and grasses native to the local area. The tranquil Cork oak forest (1) was planted nearly 100 years ago from acorns provided by Walter Burley Griffin, the designer of Canberra. The bare tree trunks are a result of cork harvesting. Cork has long been used for insulation, flooring, floats and bottle corks.