

ON THE SPOT with Alicia McCumstie

By gum, that's a big tree

STANDING in Paul Paszkowski's frontyard you can't help but feel like you are in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, with the MacMasters Beach home boasting the largest angophora costata.

Commonly known as a Sydney red gum, the breathtaking tree is the largest of its species registered on the National Register of Big Trees website, with a height of 16m, a 4.74m circumference and a 22m crown.

"We often have people turn up on our doorstep to check it out," Mr Paszkowski said.

"I actually had one man come and take some photos and ask if he could paint it."

It's obvious from the moment you see it that the impressive and seemingly gravity defying tree is something special. It also garners top honours when it comes to Gosford Council's significant tree register.

The register has been around for more than 25 years and is designed to help protect and retain trees which are of significance due to their historical value, location or species, with the Paszkowski's red gum given the highest grade.

"I had one woman stop me one day when I was in the frontyard. She said her dad had built a tree house in the tree when she was growing up and if you look along the back of it you can see the

Twisted apple

■ *Angophora costata* is often known by its common name, smooth-barked apple. It is not an apple at all, but is one of the Central Coast's most spectacular and beautiful tree species.

■ The trunk is known for its often gnarled and twisted shape with a pink to pale grey, sometimes rusty-stained bark.

■ *Angophora costata* extends from Sydney northwards to the Central Coast and as far west as Bathurst, and is common on the Hawkesbury sandstone ridges.

idents where he put the steps for them to climb up," Mr Paszkowski said.

Over the years the tree has proved a great home for a few native and foreign travellers including European bees. Now it's home to a possum who "loves eating my figs".

■ To learn more about big trees or to register one in your yard visit www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au.



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Paul Paszkowski with the massive Sydney red gum in his frontyard.

Picture: TROY SNOOK