

Eucalyptus bigalerita

Northern salmon gum

Classification

Eucalyptus | Symphyomyrtus | Exsertaria | Subexsertae | Applanatae

Nomenclature

Eucalyptus bigalerita F.Muell., *J. Proc. Linn. Soc., Bot.* 3: 96 (1859).

T: W of Mataranka, near junction of King River, Dry River and Darrinyan Creek, Northern Territory, 3–5 July 1856, *F. Mueller*; holo: MEL; iso: K.

E. pastoralis S. Moore, *J. Bot.* 40: 27 (1902). T: Adelaide River, Northern Territory, July 1886, *T.S. Lea s.n.*; holo: BM; iso: NSW.

Description

Tree to c. 17 m tall, often deciduous during the drier months prior to the wet season. Forming a lignotuber.

Bark smooth throughout, new bark pale orange to pale creamy-pink, maturing through brilliant salmon-pink to grey-white and weathering to grey just before decortication. Mature bark sometimes powdery.

Juvenile growth (coppice or field seedlings to 50 cm): stems square in cross-section, not glaucous; juvenile leaves always petiolate, alternate, deltoid to cordate, 7–18 cm long, 6.5–16 cm wide, base broadly lobed to truncate, dull grey-green.

Adult leaves alternate to sub-opposite, petioles (2)3.5–7 cm long; blade orbicular to deltoid, (6)9–15(19) cm long, (5)7–15 cm wide, base broadly lobed to truncate to rounded to tapering to petiole, margin entire, apex pointed, concolorous to slightly discolorous, usually glossy green, occasionally dull grey-green, side-veins at a wider angle than 45° to the midrib, reticulation dense to very dense, intramarginal vein present, well removed from the margin, but sometimes not well formed in larger leaves, oil glands sparse intersectional or sometimes somewhat obscure.

Inflorescence axillary unbranched, peduncles 0.3–1.2(1.4) cm long, buds per umbel 7, normally pedicellate, occasionally sessile (pedicels (0)0.2–0.9 cm long). **Mature buds** globular, 0.6–1.2 cm long, 0.6–1.1 cm wide, scar present, operculum rounded to shortly beaked, hypanthium sometimes with two longitudinal ridges, stamens regularly inflexed, anthers oblong, versatile, dorsifixed, dehiscing by longitudinal slits, style long and straight, stigma blunt, locules (3)4, the placentae each with 6 or more vertical rows of ovules. Flowers white.

Fruit sessile to shortly pedicellate (pedicels 0–0.6 cm long), obconical to hemispherical, non-glaucous, 0.6–0.9 cm long, (0.6)0.8–1.2(1.4) cm wide, disc raised and annular, valves (3)4, near the rim or slightly exserted.

Seeds dark brown to black, 2–3 mm long, ± flattened ovoid to obliquely pyramidal, dorsal surface shallowly reticulate, edge of seed sharply toothed, hilum ventral.

Cultivated seedlings (measured at ca node 10): not seen

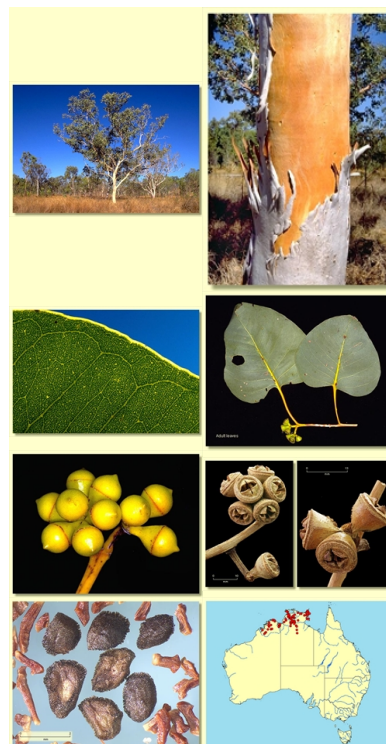
Flowering Time

Flowering has been recorded in June, July, August and September.

Notes

A medium-sized tree, common on seasonally flooded and low lying areas of the Top End and further south into the central northern district of the Northern Territory to about Daly Waters, extending west to the northern Kimberley region of Western Australia. Characterised by the smooth, brilliant coloured, salmon-pink newly exposed bark, the broad deltoid adult leaves, the globular buds and hemispherical to obconical fruit with a raised annular disc.

Eucalyptus bigalerita belongs to a small group of species closely related to the red gums. This group is distinguished by having smooth powdery bark, adult leaves with dense to very dense venation and intersectional or absent oil glands, buds with inflexed stamens, fruit with an annular disc and ± flattened, toothed seeds with a ventral hilum. Other members of this group are *E. alba*, *E. platyphylla*, *E. tintinnans*, *E. apodophylla* and *E. houseana*.



Within this group, *E. bigalerita*, with its broad orbicular to deltoid adult leaves, is closest to *E. platyphylla* and *E. tintinnans* and is only weakly separated from both. There appears to be very little difference between *E. platyphylla* and *E. bigalerita* worthy of mention (see note below). It differs from *E. tintinnans* by being a much taller, better formed tree, with larger fruit, usually wider than 0.6 cm (*E. tintinnans* is usually a poorly formed tree from the stony rises in the southern part of the Northern Territory, with fruit 0.6 cm or slightly narrower). The only other species in this group that may be confused with *E. bigalerita* is *E. alba* var. *australasica*. It also occurs in the low, flat seasonally wet areas with *E. bigalerita* and has similar buds, fruit and juveniles. It can be distinguished by having broadly lanceolate to ovate adult leaves, in contrast to the deltoid leaves of *E. bigalerita* (adult leaves in *E. alba* var. *australasica* usually narrower than 6 cm and wider than 6 cm in *E. bigalerita*). *E. apodophylla* and *E. houseana* are easily separated on adult leaf shape, colour and size. *E. houseana* has dull, long, lanceolate adult leaves always narrower than 4.5 cm and *E. apodophylla* has opposite, sessile to very shortly petiolate, glaucous to grey-green adult leaves (*E. bigalerita* usually alternate, ± glossy, distinctly petiolate and deltoid).

Because of its large, distinctly petiolate, deltoid adult leaves, *E. bigalerita* cannot be confused with any other related white gums growing within its area of occurrence, i.e. *E. brevifolia*, *E. confluens*, *E. cupularis*, *E. glomericassis*, *E. herbertiana*, *E. mooreana*, *E. ordiana*, *E. pantoleuca*, *E. rupestris* and *E. umbravarrensis*. Of this group, *E. mooreana*, *E. ordiana* and *E. pantoleuca* are the only ones with large adult leaves and they are easily distinguished by all having dull, glaucous or blue-grey adult leaves (*E. bigalerita* with ± glossy green adult leaves).

(The relationships between *Eucalyptus alba* var. *alba*, *E. alba* var. *australasica*, *E. bigalerita*, *E. hallii*, *E. platyphylla* and *E. tintinnans* need further investigation. *E. alba* var. *alba*, *E. bigalerita*, *E. platyphylla* and *E. tintinnans* are all very similar, and the taxonomy, largely based on the size of adult leaves, buds and fruit, does not appear to work across the full range for this group. It maybe better that all four species be placed in one variable taxon, using the oldest name, *Eucalyptus alba*. Such a revision is beyond the scope of EUCLID; thus we have adopted the current curatorial status for this group).

MORE ABOUT RED GUMS AND OTHER ASSOCIATED GROUPS

Origin of Name

Eucalyptus bigalerita: Latin *bi*, two and *galerum*, cap or helmet-like covering for the head, referring to the double operculum which is emphasised in Mueller's original description.

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