

Eucalyptus pachyphylla

Red bud mallee, Red bull mallee

Classification

Eucalyptus | Symphyomyrtus | Bisectae | Destitutae | Curviptera | Xylocarpae

Nomenclature

Eucalyptus pachyphylla F.Muell., *J. Proc. Linn. Soc., Bot.*, 3: 98 (1859).

T: Hooker Creek, Northern Territory, Feb. 1856, *F. Mueller*; holo: MEL; iso: K.

Description

Mallee to 5 m tall. Forming a lignotuber.

Bark smooth pale brown, shedding in strips to reveal silvery to pale grey-white new bark.

Branchlets lacking oil glands in the pith; non-glaucous.

Juvenile growth (coppice or field seedlings to 50 cm): stems rounded in cross-section; juvenile leaves always petiolate, opposite only for lowest nodes then alternate, coarse, ovate to lanceolate, to 16 cm long, to 5 cm wide, dull, greyish green. Wax visible only on new growing tips but not persisting as leaves expand and stems elongate.

Adult leaves alternate, petioles 1.2–3.5 cm long; blade thick, ovate to lanceolate, 6–11.5(16) cm long, (1.5)2–4.5 cm wide, base rounded to tapering, apex pointed, concolorous, green to blue-grey, side-veins at a wide angle to midrib, reticulation very dense and broken or obscure due the thickness of the leaves, intramarginal vein present, oil glands sparse, intersectional.

Inflorescence axillary unbranched, held erect or spreading, peduncles rounded to angular, 0.4–2(2.5) cm long, buds 3, pedicellate, pedicels 0.3–1 cm long. **Mature buds** ovoid (1.8–3.2 cm long, 1.3–2.5 cm wide), pinkish when close to flowering, with 5–7 prominent thin longitudinal ribs, scar present, operculum beaked (1.3–2.5 cm long), stamens arranged more or less obliquely or the outer oblique and the inner finally flexed downwards, anthers cuboid, dehiscing by lateral slits, style long, stigma tapered, locules 4(5), the placentae each with 8 or 10 vertical ovule rows. Flowers creamy yellow.

Fruit held erect, pedicellate, pedicels 0.3–1.5 cm long, broadly and shallowly obconical to shallowly hemispherical, 0.6–1.5 cm long, (1.2)1.6–3.5 cm wide including the ribs, disc raised and concave to oblique, valves 4(5), exserted.

Seeds grey-brown, 2–4.5 mm long, more or less flattened-pyramidal, dorsal surface shallowly reticulate, sides ridges, encircling marginal flange usually present, hilum more or less terminal.

Cultivated seedlings (measured at ca node 10): cotyledons Y-shaped (bisected); stems rounded in cross-section; leaves always petiolate, opposite for 4 to 7 nodes then becoming alternate, ovate to lanceolate, 5–10.7 cm long, 2.5–5 cm long, base rounded to tapering, dull, green, concolorous.

Flowering Time

Flowering has been recorded in March, April, May, June, July, August, September and December.

Eucalyptus pachyphylla has ornamental potential for arid areas because of its decorative buds that turn pink before flowering, and its large creamy yellow flowers.

Notes

A mallee widespread through the central Northern Territory extending east to far western Queensland on Glenormiston station and west into Western Australia where it is found in the Great Sandy Desert, Gibson Desert and Little Sandy Desert. It occurs mostly on red sand plains with spinifex but in more western desert areas may occur on stonier sites and on drifts of red sands overlying sandstone and quartzite.

Eucalyptus pachyphylla belongs in *Eucalyptus* subgenus *Symphyomyrtus* section *Bisectae* subsection *Destitutae* because the buds have two opercula, cotyledons are Y-shaped and branchlets lack oil glands in the pith. Within this subsection *E. pachyphylla* is one of about 30 closely related species and subspecies forming series *Curviptera* which is characterised by having large buds in umbels of one, three or seven, stamens erect to oblique in bud, and fruit that are relatively large and have an ascending disc and prominent valves.



E. pachyphylla is most closely related to *E. kingsmillii* and *E. youngiana*. All have buds in threes. *E. pachyphylla* differs from *E. kingsmillii* in having a short stout peduncle that is not down-turned and fruit that are also smaller in diameter although there is some overlap in dimensions. Flowers of both *E. pachyphylla* and *E. kingsmillii* subsp. *kingsmillii* are pale yellowish whilst those of *E. kingsmillii* subsp. *alatissima* are pink to red. All three taxa have buds with prominent longitudinal thin ribs, with *E. pachyphylla* and *E. kingsmillii* subsp. *alatissima* showing the greatest development of this character. *E. youngiana* has much larger buds and fruit on spreading to down-turned peduncles, buds that are not as prominently ribbed, and red to pink or sometimes yellow flowers. *E. kingsmillii* and *E. youngiana* are usually (but not always) rough-barked mallees or small trees whilst *E. pachyphylla* is usually a smooth-barked mallee that rarely may develop a short basal stocking of rough bark, especially in the west of its range in the Mt Beadell and Notabilis Hill area of the Gibson Desert.

E. pachyphylla differs from *E. sessilis* in having buds in threes (always sevens in *E. sessilis*). The buds of *E. sessilis* are slightly smaller and not as prominently ribbed as those of *E. pachyphylla*. The fruit of *E. sessilis* are hemispherical, broadly and shallowly obconical in *E. pachyphylla*. Buds and fruit of *E. pachyphylla* are conspicuously pedicellate whereas they are sessile or almost so in *E. sessilis*.

Origin of Name

Eucalyptus pachyphylla : Greek *pachy-*, thick and *-phyllus*, leaved.

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