

# WATTLE

## Acacias of Australia

### *Acacia elachantha* M.W.McDonald & Maslin



Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
B.R. Maslin



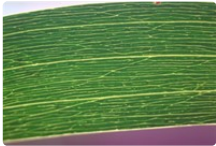
Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
B.R. Maslin



Image courtesy of Northern Territory Herbarium



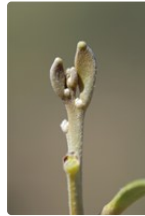
Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
B.R. Maslin



Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
B.R. Maslin



Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
B.R. Maslin



Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
B.R. Maslin



Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
B.R. Maslin



Source: WorldWideWattle ver. 2.  
Published at: [www.worldwidewattle.com](http://www.worldwidewattle.com)  
See illustration.



*Acacia elachantha* occurrence map.  
Occurrence map generated via Atlas of Living  
Australia (<https://www.ala.org.au>).

#### Family

Fabaceae

#### Distribution

Occurs mainly in the tropical arid zone region between latitudes 17°–24°S, extending from the Pilbara and Kimberley regions in W.A. across N.T. to central and south-western Qld. and far north-eastern S.A. (on Cordillo Downs Stn).

#### Description

Spindly **shrub** 2–3 m high, rarely a **tree** 5–6 (–8) m high; crown sparsely foliated. **Branchlets** angled at extremities becoming **terete** with age, **glabrous** or minutely **sericeous**. New shoots **glabrous** or **sericeous** with yellow or silver hairs. Phyllodes shallowly to strongly **falcate**, 8–19 (–20) cm long, 7–22 mm wide, **coriaceous**, either **glabrous** and lightly **pruinose** or minutely **sericeous**; **longitudinal** nerves numerous, 2–4 per mm, with normally 3 more prominent than the rest and the lowermost 2 running together at base of **phyllode**; minor nerves occasionally **anastomosing**. Inflorescences 1 or 2 per **axil**, **simple** or **vestigial binate** racemes with **axes** to 1 mm long; peduncles 3–12 mm long, hairy or **glabrous**; spikes 1.5–3.3 cm long, light golden; bracteoles **spathulate**, 0.5 mm long. Flowers 5-**merous**; sepals united; **ovary** hairy or **glabrous**. Pods **linear**, **straight** to shallowly **curved**, 3–3.5 (–4) mm wide, **chartaceous** to **coriaceous**, **glabrous** to very sparsely minutely hairy. Seeds **longitudinal**, **±oblong**, 3.5–4 mm long, glossy, dark brown to black; **aril** yellow.

#### Phenology

Flowers May–Aug.

#### Habitat

Grows mainly on red sand plains, run-on sites associated with low rocky hills or lateritic plains.

#### Specimens

W.A.: Millstream pipeline access rd, 1.5 km W of Karratha rd (c. 3 km due S of Karratha township), *B.R.Maslin 5748* (PERTH); 11.6 km W of Kiwirrkurra, *G.J.Morse 2557* (PERTH). N.T.: 28 km N of Daly Waters township turnoff on Stuart Hwy, *B.R.Maslin 7410*, *M.McDonald & G.Leach* (CANB, DNA, PERTH). S.A.: Cordillo Downs Stn, *P.E.Conrick 2231* (AD, PERTH). Qld: 5 miles [8 km] SE of 'Arrabury' on 'Lake Pure' road, *J.Pickard 1768* (K, NSW).

#### Notes

*Acacia elachantha* is a fast growing, short-lived species that produces prolific quantities of seed. Introduced into parts of west Africa (as *A. cowleana*) since the early 1980s for fuelwood, soil rehabilitation and more recently for the use of its seeds as an alternative food. Based on allozyme evidence, populations of *A. elachantha* have almost no genetic differentiation either within or between populations (Moran *et al.*, in A.P.N.House & C.E.Harwood (eds), *Australian Dry-Zone Acacias for Human Food 78–79* (1992); referred to as *A. cowleana*). This study also found that glasshouse-grown progeny were genetically identical to the parents suggesting *A. elachantha* has allopolyploid origins and/or an apomictic breeding system. Hybridisation between *A. elachantha* and *A. neurocarpa* (cited as the diploid race of *A. holosericea*) was also suggested as the origin of the hexaploid species *A. coleii*.

Two variants, distinguished mainly on the presence or absence of indumentum, were recognised by M.W.McDonald & B.R.Maslin, *Austral. Syst. Bot.* 10: 303–320 (1997), but further study is required to resolve their taxonomic status; the above description incorporates both taxa but specimens cited refer only to typical *A. elachantha*. The hairy variant is more widely distributed and more commonly collected than the glabrous variant which is presently known as *Acacia* sp. *Urandangie* (L.Pedley 2025). *Acacia elachantha* is closely allied to, and previously confused with, *A. cowleana* and the two could be considered cryptic species. Apart from its mainly creek bank habitat and its more southerly distribution, *A. cowleana* is distinguished from *A. elachantha* by its more robust habit and foliage, its resinous new

shoots, its longer spikes with larger flowers and its wider pods, see M.W.McDonald & B.R.Maslin, *loc. cit.*, for further discussion. The two species sometimes putatively hybridize in the Mitchell district, Qld. The differences between these two species and their closest relatives, *A. colei*, *A. leptocarpa*, *A. longispicata*, *A. thomsonii* and hybrids involving *A. colei* × *A. elachantha* and *A. elachantha* × *A. gonoclada* are documented in M.W.McDonald & B.R.Maslin, *loc. cit.* Also related to *A. holosericea* and its allies and is superficially similar to *A. fecunda*.

Further details on the ecology and utilisation of *A. elachantha* (referred to as *A. cowleana*) are given in J.C.Doran & J.W.Turnbull (eds), *Australian Trees & Shrubs: Species for Land Rehabilitation & Farm Planting in the Tropics* 134–135 (1997) and by P.Latz, *Bushfires & Bushtucker* 94 (1995).

#### FOA Reference

Data derived from *Flora of Australia* Volumes 11A (2001), 11B (2001) and 12 (1998), products of ABRS, ©Commonwealth of Australia

#### Author

M.W.Mcdonald

Minor edits by B.R.Maslin, J.Reid & J.Rogers

---

This identification key and fact sheets are available as a mobile application:



Australian Government  
Department of the Environment and Energy



Department of  
Biodiversity, Conservation  
and Attractions  
Western Australian Herbarium



Australian  
Biological  
Resources  
Study



URL: <https://keys.lucidcentral.org/keys/v3/wattle>  
Copyright 2018. All rights reserved.