

# WATTLE

## *Acacias of Australia*

### *Acacia melanoxylon* R.Br.



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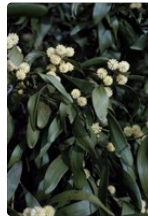
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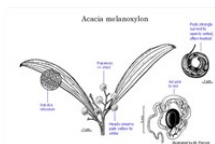
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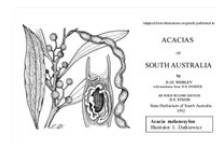
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*Acacia melanoxylon* occurrence map.  
Occurrence map generated via Atlas of Living Australia (<https://www.ala.org.au>).

## Common Name

Blackwood, Hickory, Sally Wattle, Mudgerabah

## Family

Fabaceae

## Distribution

Widespread, often common in south-eastern Australia, extending from the Atherton Tableland S through the highlands of Qld, N.S.W., A.C.T., Vic. and Tas., also the Mt Lofty and Flinders Ranges, S.A.; naturalized in places in south-western W.A.

## Description

**Tree** 6–30 (–45) m high; sometimes a **shrub** 1.5–3 m high; may spread by root suckers; **bipinnate** leaves often persist on young plants. Bark hard, **fissured** and somewhat scaly. **Branchlets** angular at extremities, ribbed, **glabrous**, rarely **puberulous**. Phyllodes narrowly **elliptic**, **lanceolate** or **oblanceolate**, often inequilateral, **straight** to **±falcate**, 4–16 cm long, 6–30 mm wide, **obtuse** to **acute**, **±coriaceous**, dark green, **glabrous**, with 3–5 main nerves and prominently **reticulate** in between (**nerve** islands **±rectangular**). Inflorescences comprising mostly 3–5-headed racemes; **raceme** axes 6–40 mm long; peduncles 4–13 mm long, **glabrous** or **puberulous**; heads **globular**, 6 mm diam., 30–56-flowered, creamy pale yellow to white. Flowers 5-merous; sepals 3/4 or more united. Pods strongly **curved** to openly **coiled** and often twisted, to 15 cm long, 3.5–8 mm wide, **coriaceous** to subwoody, **glabrous**. Seeds **longitudinal**, broadly **elliptic**, 3–5 mm long, glossy, black; **funicle** **fleshy**, pink to deep red, twice-encircling seed.

## Habitat

Grows in a diversity of habitats, but favours fertile soils in valleys and on flats in mountainous areas, often growing in wet sclerophyll forest and cooler rainforest. In north-western Tas. *A. melanoxyton* grows as a tall dominant tree in forested seasonal swamps.

## Specimens

W.A.: Lake Powell Nat. Res., Elleker, *G.J. & B.J. Keighery 190* (PERTH). S.A.: Mt Lofty summit, c. 12 km SE of Adelaide, 2 Sept. 1922, *E.H. Ising s.n.*(AD). Qld: near Crater Natl Park, *A.K. Irvine 47* (BRI). N.S.W.: Chaelundi Mtn, 37 km N of Ebor, *H. Streiman 8159* (PERTH); Camerons Camp, Ballangry State Forest, *A. Gunnell 23* (PERTH). A.C.T.: 8 km SW of Uriarra HS on Uriarra/Brindabella road, *J.M. Fox & K.J. Cowley 88/032* (CANB *n.v.*, NSW). Vic.: The Lakes Natl Park, Rotamah Is., *I. Crawford 498* (PERTH). Tas.: Warners Sugar Loaf, *J. Playford 8916* (CANB).

## Notes

Often confused with *A. implexa* which differs in its branchlets being commonly pruinose, phyllodes with the reticulum comprising more elongated nerve islands and by its funicle/aryl which is white and not encircling the seed. Related to, and superficially very similar in habit and foliage to *A. frigescentis*, with which it is sometimes sympatric. Also seemingly related to *A. oraria* which has broader pods and is scurfy on its branchlets, phyllodes and inflorescences, especially when they are young.

One of the most wide ranging tree species in eastern Australia and considerably variable, particularly in phyllode size and shape, where the variation appears to be continuous (see T.P. Farrell & D.H. Ashton, *Austral. J. Bot.* 26: 365, 1978, for discussion of variation in phyllode shape and size). There is considerable allozyme variation, both within and between populations, as demonstrated by J. Playford *et al.*, *Austral. J. Bot.* 41: 355–368 (1993). This study showed that populations north of the Hunter R., N.S.W., differ substantially in terms of their chemistry from those to the south; the Ebor population (N.S.W., north of the Hunter R.) was atypical. Notes on ecology and timber value of *A. melanoxyton* in Tas. are provided by S.M. Jennings, *Blackwood, Native Forest Silviculture Technical Bulletin* No. 10 (1991).

Wood prized for cabinet work, panelling and for stringed instruments. Cultivated in some countries (e.g. Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka) for lumber, fuelwood and amenity plantings, but the timber quality is inferior to the Australian grown wood (*vide* S.J. Midgley & K. Vivekanandan, in J.W. Turnbull (ed.), *Australian Acacias in Developing Countries* 132–135 (1987)). In South Africa the species has become an environmental weed which is difficult to control because of its fast growth rate and its vigorous regrowth from root suckers and regeneration from seed, *vide* C.H. Stirton, *Plant Invaders* 52–55 (1978). In cultivation, *A. melanoxyton* needs to be managed properly to ensure that it does not become invasive. Further information on the biological and ecological features, and the utilisation potential, of this species is given in B.R. Maslin and M.W. McDonald, *AcaciaSearch: Evaluation of Acacia as a woody crop option for southern Australia*, RIRDC Publication No. 03/017, 128–135 (2004).

## FOA Reference

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

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

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



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URL: <https://keys.lucidcentral.org/keys/v3/wattle>  
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