

# Genus *Corymbia*

During a session that I presented at the August social meeting a question concerning *Corymbia* was raised, about which some disagreement arose. I therefore decided to do some research on the topic as it is a somewhat contemporary issue and causes some confusion. Reading several references in my "library" added further uncertainty and I discovered that disagreement on the issue is still current amongst some botanists. The most specific definition I found was from the net and appears in the Wikipedia pages. The following extract is from that reference - "*Corymbia is a genus of about 113 species of tree that were classified as Eucalyptus species until the mid-1990s. It includes the bloodwoods, ghost gums, spotted gums amongst others. The bloodwoods had been recognised as a distinct group within the large and diverse Eucalyptus genus since 1867. Molecular research in the 1990s, however, showed that they, along with the rest of the Corymbia section, are more closely related to Angophora than to Eucalyptus, and are probably best regarded as a separate genus. All three genera - Angophora, Corymbia and Eucalyptus - are closely related, often difficult to tell apart, and are still commonly and correctly referred to as "eucalypts". Groups of naturalists and conservationists do not recognise the Corymbia genus and still categorise its species within Eucalyptus.*"

## What's in a name?

Although there is a group of subgenera within *Genus Eucalyptus*, there are simple classifications which are commonly used and made according to the bark type. During the early days of discovery, many trees were given names of trees with some similar appearances from Europe. Thus amongst the eucalypts, boxes, apples, ashes, mahoganies etc. were named. These general classifications still remain.

### **Ashes**

the term generally applied to some southern species which have upper bark which peels off in long strips.

### **Gums**

although -gum tree is the common term for all eucalypts, there is a group called gums which generally have smooth bark.

### **Peppermints**

trees having hard finely fissured bark and aromatic oils in the leaves.

### **Boxes**

trees with hard fine fibred and persistent bark to all of the branches.

### **Ironbarks**

trees with hard, dark and deeply fissured bark.

### **Mallees**

small trees, often with multiple stems and usually having lignotubers.

## **Bloodwoods**

trees usually having soft pale reddish brown bark and often have blood like sap which readily runs from scars in the trunk.

However in all of the rough groupings there are many trees which do not comply and it is more accurate to define trees using other botanical means such as foliage and fruit. All of the Bloodwood group do not assume the characteristics above. A prime example is Lemon-scented gum, now named *Corymbia citriodora* which has smooth hard bark. Of the one hundred or so species moved from *Eucalyptus* to *Corymbia* the following are common.

**Ghost Gum** - *Corymbia apparrerinja*

**Lemon-scented gum** - *Corymbia citriodora*

**Blackbutt** - *Corymbia intermedia*

**Carbeen** - *Corymbia tessellaris*

**Spotted gum** - *Corymbia maculata*

In addition many of the trees with common names which includes the word Bloodwood.

## **Summary**

There are some botanists who believe that *Corymbia's* should remain as a sub-genus of *Eucalyptus*. It is not incorrect to use the older term i.e. *Eucalyptus* when referring to these trees, in fact on a recent walk through the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, I noticed that they are still labelled as *Eucalyptus*.

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