

# Red Mulga

## *Acacia cyperophylla*

*Red Mulga is a rare tree from our harsh deserts. Of particular interest is the bark which is said to be 'mineritchie'. Mineritchie bark is characterised by the bright red colour and by the manner in which it forms numerous narrow distinctive curls. There are a number of small Acacias from northern Australia which display Mineritchie bark as well as a couple of Eucalypts. There is a fine example of a Red Mulga in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, situated close to the sealed walkway adjacent to the Mallee Garden.*

### Derivation of names

*Acacia* from Greek '*akakia*', referring to the sharp thorns characteristic of several species.

*cyperophylla* – in two parts - from Greek, *Cyperus* – the Genus of sedge plants, and *phyllon* – leaf , thus having leaves like the sedges.

### Other Names

Mineritchie, Miniritchi, Creekline Mineritchie.

### The Tree

Usually a tall shrub or sometimes a small shapely tree growing to 8 metres high, branching near the ground or one metre above. The largest trunks would be less than 200 mm in diameter. The trunk and branches are distinctively red with Mineritchie bark. Phyllodes are modified leaves and in this case are very long – up to 200 mm long and almost circular in cross section. They are designed to prevent loss of moisture through transpiration (being arid lands plants). Their natural environment is in country receiving between 150 and 250 mm of annual rainfall. The flowers are cylindrical shaped, axillary and usually in pairs, pale yellow in colour and up to 20 mm long. The fruit are legumes up to 70 x 10 mm.



*Mineritchie bark*

*Foliage & flowers*



## Habitat

Although rare and growing only in small scattered populations, Red Mulga is dispersed over much of the arid parts of central Australia. In South Australia, it is restricted to the northern parts of the Lake Eyre region where it is often associated with Gidgee (*Acacia cambagei*) and Coolabah (*Eucalyptus coolabah*). It also grows in parts of Northern Territory, New South Wales and Queensland. Red Mulga is always restricted to stony watercourses and along creek banks – thus the common name Creekline Mineritchie.

## Timber

Like many of our Acacia's it is not a commercial timber, and therefore little is written about its qualities. It is very similar to Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) being a very hard tough and dense timber. The colour of the wood is like Mulga, with pale sapwood and a variety of rich browns in the heartwood. The colour and figure is commonly enhanced by beautiful



fiddleback grain, especially near the crotches. I have not found any reference to its weight but it must be similar to other arid land Acacia's at about 1100 Kg per cubic metre. Red Mulga works well and produces a lustre which results in a high finish. Like many of our arid land Acacia's it is an excellent turning timber.

*Ron Allen*