

Sugarwood

Myoporum platycarpum

There are about 30 species of *Myoporum*, half native to Australia. Common South Australian species are: Coastal Boobialla (*M. insulare*), Western Boobialla (*M. montanum*) and Creeping Boobialla (*M. parvifolium*). The genus *Myoporum* is closely related to the *Eremophilas*. Both are in the family *Myoporaceae*.

Derivation of names

Myoporum - from Greek '*myo*', I close and '*poros*', a pore, referring to the ability of the plants to close the pores in the leaves during hot weather, thus reducing loss of water through transpiration.

platycarpum - from Greek '*platys*', flat and '*carpos*' fruit, referring to the flattened fruit.

Other names

False Sandalwood. This is confusing as False Sandalwood is also used as a common name for *Eremophila mitchellii*, (also known as Budda).

The Tree

When young, Sugarwood is an attractive, bright green, rounded shrub. It develops into a tree to ten metres high with a robust erect trunk. Old trees often have large gnarled, deformed branches.

The bark on old specimens is very rough and flaky.

The leaves are about 50mm long and are pale shiny green. The leaves are narrow but fleshy and have a number of small teeth on the edges.

The bright foliage is always a feature of these trees.

The flowers are small white or pink and are star shaped, occurring in dense clusters. The fruit is a small fleshy drupe containing two seeds. The tree is said to exude a sweet resin which the Aboriginals used as an adhesive.



Habitat

In South Australia, Sugarwood grows throughout the typical wheat belt or Mallee country and through to the drier regions of the northern parts of the state. It is seldom seen growing in colonies, but usually as single plants or small groups, mainly in flat, open, sandy country.

It also grows in Victoria, New South Wales and in Western Australia.

Timber

The wood in mature trees is hard and heavy. As it is not a commercial timber or even widely known, little information is available about its properties. However, the samples that I have collected and used all sank when placed in a bowl of water. Therefore it can be calculated that its density is greater than 1.00 and its weight is greater than 1000Kg per cubic metre, making it a heavy wood. The sapwood varies from straw to pale yellow, while the heartwood is brown with streaky lines. As with most hard woods it turns well.



One of the pleasant experiences when working Sugarwood is the sweet sugary aroma emitted. It is not very permanent. It is also reputed to give off this sweet odour when it is burnt, similar to Sandalwood, thus the common name False Sandalwood. The wood has a number of dark, almost black inclusions which seem to be a resin. These seem to retain the sweet sugary aroma.

It is also said to be a useful fodder tree in times of drought. There are no reports of other commercial applications. It is not resistant to termite attack.

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