

Botanical name

Acacia affin. *baxteri*

The taxon described here has affinities to *A. baxteri* but the nature of the relationship needs yet to be assessed.

Common name

None known.

Characteristic features

Rigid prickly *shrubs*. *Bark* dark grey and tessellated. *Branchlets* finely ribbed, sometimes pruinose at extremities. *Stipules* spiny. *Phyllodes* small, rigid, dark green, midrib prominent and raised (when dry) on each face, apex narrowed to very sharp, needle-like points. *Heads* globular, on very short, red peduncles, mature flower buds often tinged orange. *Pods* terete, curved, dark red-brown. *Seeds* mottled.

Description

Habit. Harsh, rigid, prickly, much-branched, erect *shrubs* 1-2 m tall and about the same across, single-stemmed or sparingly branched at ground level, the main stems and branches slightly contorted.

Bark. Dark grey, tessellated.

Branchlets. Finely ribbed, glabrous, brownish green or (especially when in fruit) white-pruinose at their extremities.

Stipules. Spiny, small, shallowly recurved, yellowish at base but brown at tips.

Phyllodes. More or less narrowly oblong, narrowed towards the apex, 8-10 mm long, 1-2 mm wide, flat, rigid, widely spreading, glabrous, dark green; with 1 prominent *longitudinal nerve* (midrib) on each face; *upper margin* not thickened and nerve-like as in *A. andrewsii*; *apices* narrowed to a needle-like pungent point.

Heads. Single within axil of phyllodes, globular, 5-6 mm in diameter when fresh, compact with the stamens scarcely exerted beyond the petals at anthesis, rich golden, 25-30-flowered; *mature flower buds* yellow but often tinged orange; *peduncles* 2-4 mm long (in flower), up to 6 mm long when in fruit, glabrous, red.

Flowers. 5-merous; *sepals* free.

Pods. Terete, 4-5 cm long, 2-3 mm wide, coriaceous-crustaceous to sub-woody, curved, glabrous, dark red (tinged brown), finely longitudinally nerved.

Seeds. Longitudinal in the pods, 3-4 mm long, 1-1.5 mm wide, yellow/grey bespeckled with brown mottlings; *aril* creamy white.

Taxonomy

The taxonomic status of this apparently uncommon taxon needs to be assessed in the light of more collections and research. In particular its relationship to the northern variant of *A. baxteri* (see Maslin, in press) needs to be examined (both these taxa have pruinose branchlets); the northern variant of *A. baxteri* does not occur in the Kalannie region.

Related species. *Acacia* affin. *baxteri* is most closely related to the more southerly distributed *A. baxteri* which is a smaller plant (0.3-0.6 m tall) and which differs (presumably significantly) in that the upper margin of its phyllodes are significantly thickened and nerve-like, its pods are broader (3.5-5 mm wide) and its seeds are larger (5-6 mm wide) and not mottled.

Within the Kalannie region *A. affin. baxteri* is most similar to *A. andrewsii* which is distinguished by its light grey, +/- ribless branchlets, slightly longer (4-5 mm), yellowish flowering peduncles, yellowish flower buds (not tinged orange), non-mottled seeds and phyllodes with thickened and somewhat nerve-like upper margins.

Distribution

Known only from a single, extremely localized population in the north-east extremity of the Kalannie region. There was some natural regeneration occurring along a graded road verge adjacent to this population in 1996.

Habitat

Occurs on a low rise in shallow soil over highly weathered granite.

Recorded from the following Kalannie region Land Management Unit. Shallow Soil over Granite.

Conservation status

This taxon has been recommended for inclusion on the *Declared Rare and Priority List* of the Department of Conservation and Land Management as a Priority 1 taxon.

Priority 1 - Poorly Known Taxa. 'Taxa which are known from one or a few (generally <5) populations which are under threat, either due to small population size, or being on lands under immediate threat, e.g. road verges, urban areas, farmland, active mineral leases, etc., or the plants are under threat, e.g. from disease, grazing by feral animals, etc. May include taxa with threatened populations on protected lands. Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in urgent need for further survey.'

Flowering

June to July.

Fruiting

Pods with mature seeds have been collected in early December.

Collecting pods by hand can be difficult on account of the prickly foliage (stout gloves are recommended) and because the pods are scattered over the plants. Gently beating of the plants and collecting the pods and seeds on a ground sheet is probably a more efficient way of collection. However, the pods may be difficult to dislodge and again the prickly phyllodes can cause problems if they become dislodged with the pods.

Biological features

No information available.

Propagation

Propagate from seed.

Revegetation

Acacia affin. *baxteri* would appear to have low value for revegetation in the Kalannie region. This species is rare in the area and is habitat specific.

Utilisation

Wildlife refuge. Its intricately-branched crown and prickly foliage provides good wildlife protection (especially for small nesting birds).

Reference

Maslin, B.R. (in press). *Acacia*. In *Flora of Australia* vol. 11 (CSIRO, Melbourne: Australia.)