

## Botanical name

*Acacia eremaea* C.R.P.Andrews, J. W. Austral. Nat. Hist. Soc. 1: 40 (1904)

The botanical name is derived from the Greek *eremaios* (which, according to Sharr 1996 is a poetic form of *eremos*, desert) and alludes to the arid environment where this species grows.

## Common name

Southern Snakewood.

## Characteristic features

Small *trees* with rather twisted, gnarled trunks and branches and a dense crown. *Phyllodes* large, narrowly elliptic to elliptic-lanceolate, gradually tapered to an acuminate apex, sub-rigid, glaucous, obscurely multi-nerved (3 nerves more evident than the rest); *pulvinus* well-developed. *Heads* globular, many-flowered. *Flowers* 4-merous. *Seeds* large; *aril* poorly developed. *Saline* habitat.

## Description

**Habit.** Spreading tall *shrubs* or small *trees* 2-5 m tall, with characteristically gnarled, twisted trunks and main branches and a dense crown 3-6 m wide which, on oldest trees, is confined to the upper 30% of the plants, young plants are rounded *shrubs* with the foliage extending to ground level.

**Bark.** Grey and fibrous.

**Branchlets.** Glabrous or tips sparsely appressed-hairy.

**Phyllodes.** Narrowly elliptic to elliptic-lanceolate, broadest near or below the middle and gradually tapered towards the apex, 6-12 cm long, 6-17 mm wide, sub-rigid, erect, straight to slightly incurved, glabrous (or sparsely hairy at extreme base), glaucous; *longitudinal nerves* numerous, close together and indistinct (i.e. immersed within the lamina), typically 3 nerves slightly raised and more evident than the rest; *apices* acuminate with coarsely pungent points; *pulvinus* well-developed, orange.

**Heads.** 2-4 within axil of phyllodes, globular, 7-8 mm diameter when fresh, light golden, 54-85-flowered; *peduncles* 5-10(-12) mm long, appressed-hairy or sometimes glabrous.

**Flowers.** 4-merous; *sepals* free.

**Pods.** Linear, strongly raised over the seeds, mostly 6-9 cm long, 5-7 mm wide, chartaceous, straight to slightly curved, glabrous.

**Seeds.** Longitudinal in the pods, 5-7 mm long, 3-3.5 mm wide, glossy, brown; *funicle* ribbon-like, enlarged at seed into minute, flat aril.

## Taxonomy

**Related species.** *Acacia eremaea* is not likely to be confused with any other species within the Kalannie region. It is most closely related to the more northerly distributed *A. xiphophylla* which is readily distinguished by its spicate inflorescence, united sepals and seed characters.

## Distribution

Occurs in Western Australia from Boolardy and Cue south to near Wongan Hills.

*Acacia eremaea* is of restricted occurrence within the Kalannie region but common in the places where it occurs.

### **Habitat**

Grows on sand or sandy loam over sandy clay, normally in association with salt lakes.

**Recorded from the following Kalannie region Land Management Unit.** Alluvial Sand over Clay.

### **Conservation status**

Not considered rare or endangered.

### **Flowering**

Herbarium records show that over its geographic range *A. eremaea* flowers from July to October. However, it is probable that local conditions affect the onset of flowering.

In September 1997 most plants in the Kalannie region were sterile (occasional plants were in flower).

### **Fruiting**

Based on existing records for this species pods with mature seeds have been collected in December. However, considering its long flowering period it is likely that further sampling will extend the known fruiting range.

In December 1996 plants in the Kalannie region were sterile and this may have been related to the timing and/or intensity of rainfall events (reduced seed set also occurred in many other acacias in the region that year).

### **Biological features**

**Growth characteristics.** Probably slow-growing; will tolerate most frosts according to Elliot and Jones (1982).

### **Propagation**

Propagate from seed.

### **Revegetation**

Despite its probable slow growth rate this species would be suited for inclusion in mixed plantings for saline areas in the Kalannie region. Considerable regeneration occurred in natural populations south of Lake Hillman.

Wilcox *et al.* (1996) recommend this species for revegetation in the Midlands and northern wheatbelt regions of Western Australia in areas where the soil comprises red sandy loam over clay or hardpan or sand over red or yellow clay, or for shallow soil over granite or gneiss.

### **Utilisation**

**Salinity control.** See Revegetation above.

**Erosion control.** Well-suited to stabilising the alluvial sands that occur in and around the salt lake systems where this species naturally grows.

**Shade, shelter and wildlife refuge.** The dense spreading crowns offer good protection for stock and wildlife in the very inhospitable environments where this species occurs.

**Amenity planting.** Although not commonly cultivated, this species has highly decorative foliage and, according to Elliot and Jones (1982), could be suited growing in "hot dry climates".

## References

- Elliot, W.R. and Jones, D.L. (1982). *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants suitable for cultivation*. vol. 2. (Lothian Publishing Company.)
- Sharr, F.A. (1996). *Western Australian plant names and their meanings. A glossary*. Enlarged edition (University of Western Australia Press: Perth.)
- Wilcox, D.G., Lefroy, E.C., Stoneman, T.C., Schoknecht, N.R. and Griffin, E.A. (1996). *Trees and shrubs for the Midlands and Northern Wheatbelt*. (Agriculture W.A.: Western Australia.)