

Botanical name

Acacia eremophila var. *variabilis* Maiden & Blakely, J. Roy. Soc. W. Australia 13: 6, pl. 4, figs 12-20 (1928)

The species name is derived from the Greek *eremos* (desert) and *phileo* (to love) and refers to the dry habitats in which this species occurs.

The varietal name is a Latin word meaning *variable*, and refers to the unusually long phyllodes relative to var. *eremophila*.

Common name

None known.

Characteristic features

Branchlet extremities, pulvinus and peduncles conspicuously white-hairy. *Phyllodes* terete, slender, about 10-nerved (the nerves slightly raised and pimply: observe at x10 magnification), apices curved to uncinata and narrowed into acute to acuminate, dark brown, +/- coarsely pungent points. *Heads* globular to slightly obloid, on very short peduncles. *Pods* undulate, hairy.

Description

Habit. Multi-stemmed rounded *shrubs* 1-2.5 m tall and up to 4 m wide, canopy dense and extending to ground level.

Bark. Light grey, finely longitudinally fissured at base of the main stems, otherwise smooth.

Branchlets. Conspicuously and densely white-hairy at extremities.

Phyllodes. Terete, 4-8(-11) cm long, 0.7-1 mm in diameter, slender, sub-rigid, erect, straight to shallowly incurved, glabrous (except conspicuously white-hairy at base and on pulvinus), green; *longitudinal nerves* about 10, close together, slightly raised and minutely pimply (observe at x10 magnification); *apices* curved to uncinata, narrowed into brown, acute to acuminate, +/- coarsely pungent points.

Heads. Paired within axil of phyllodes, globular to slightly obloid, golden, 20-25-flowered; *peduncles* 1-2 mm long, sometimes obscured by anthers at anthesis so heads appear +/- sessile, conspicuously white hairy, persisting after the flowers have dropped.

Flowers. 5-merous; *sepals* mostly to 1/2-united, sometimes free.

Pods. Linear, undulate, raised over seeds and not or scarcely constricted between them, 4-5 cm long, 1.5-3 mm wide, thinly crustaceous, hairy.

Seeds. Longitudinal in the pods, 2.5-3 mm long, 1.5-2 mm wide.

Taxonomy

Varieties. *Acacia eremophila* comprises two varieties but only var. *variabilis* occurs in the Kalannie region. Variety *eremophila* is distinguished from var. *variabilis* by its shorter phyllodes (mostly 2.5-4 cm long) and its non-undulate, glabrous pods.

Related species. *Acacia eremophila* together with *A. dissona*, *A. hadrophylla*, *A. densiflora*, *A. kalgoorliensis*, *A. mackeyana*, *A. papulosa* and *A. undosa* constitute the taxonomically very complex "*A. densiflora* group", see Cowan and Maslin (1995) for discussion. Apart from *A. eremophila* itself, the other member of this group that occur in the Kalannie region are *A. dissona* var. *indoloria*, *A. densiflora*, *A. kalgoorliensis* and *A. mackeyana*.

Acacia eremophila var. *variabilis* is distinguished from the other members of the "*A. densiflora* group" within the Kalannie region by a combination of the following characters: phyllodes rather long, slender, 10-nerved (nerves pimpled: observe at x10 magnification) and ending in curved to uncinately, +/- coarsely pungent points, branchlet extremities, pulvinus and peduncles conspicuously and densely white-hairy, and pods undulate and hairy.

Distribution

Scattered and discontinuous in southern Western Australia where it is recorded from Kalannie, Comet Vale, Zanthus and Balladonia.

Variety *variabilis* is rare in the Kalannie region being known from a single, localized population on the western margin of Lake Moore.

Habitat

In the Kalannie region this variety grows in brown sand on a slight rise with *Eucalyptus salicola* adjacent to salt lakes.

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

Conservation status

Treated as a Priority 3 species on the Department of Conservation and Land Management's *Declared Rare and Priority Flora List*.

Priority 3 - Poorly Known Taxa. 'Taxa which are known from several populations, at least some of which are not believed to be under immediate threat (i.e. not currently endangered). Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in need of further survey.'

Flowering

The relative few herbarium records of var. *variabilis* were all collected in September.

Plants in the Kalannie region had just finished flowering in early September 1997 (they were probably at anthesis in the July/August period).

Fruiting

There is no reliable information available regarding the fruiting period for this variety.

Biological features

No information available.

Propagation

No information available.

Revegetation

Although var. *variabilis* is rare in the Kalannie region it has potential for use in salinity control and soil stabilisation programs. It would be useful for planting in areas of sand over clay around saltlakes.

Utilisation

Salinity control. See Revegetation above.

Soil stabilisation. See Revegetation above.

Wildlife refuge. On account of its dense, spreading crown that extends to the ground var. *variabilis* has the potential for offering good protection for small wildlife.

Reference

Cowan, R.S. and Maslin, B.R. (1995). *Acacia* Miscellany 15. Five groups of microneurous species of *Acacia*, mostly from Western Australia (Leguminosae: Mimosoideae: section Plurinerves). *Nuytsia* 10(2): 205-254.