

Botanical name

Acacia multispicata Benth., Fl. Austral. 2: 400 (1864)

The botanical name is derived from the Latin *multi* (many) and *spicatus* (spike) and refers to the profusion of inflorescence spikes which produce a spectacular display (covering the entire plant) when in full bloom.

Common name

Spiked Wattle.

Characteristic features

Multi-stemmed *shrubs* with smooth light grey bark extending from base of stems to the tips of branchlets. *Phyllodes* short, normally terete to compressed, shallowly incurved, finely multi-nerved; *apices* acute to acuminate and commonly uncinata. *Spikes* sessile, short, prolific and very showy. *Flowers* 4-merous. *Pods* moniliform to sub-moniliform, narrow.

Description

Habit. Dense, spreading, rounded, multi-stemmed *shrubs* commonly 0.4-1 m tall (ranges from 0.2-2.5 m outside the Kalannie region) and 0.6-3 m wide.

Bark. Light grey and smooth from base of the stems to tips of branchlets.

Branchlets. Glabrous or sparsely hairy.

Phyllodes. Terete to compressed, occasionally flat (but not in the Kalannie region), normally 2-7 cm long, 1-1.5 mm wide, sub-rigid, ascending to erect, shallowly incurved (can be straight outside the Kalannie region), dull, green, glabrous; *longitudinal nerves* numerous (rarely 8-nerved outside the Kalannie region), fine, close together; *apices* acute to acuminate and commonly uncinata, not pungent.

Spikes. Mostly paired within axil of phyllodes, +/- sessile (peduncles 0-2 mm long, glabrous or hairy), 9-11 mm long and 7-8 mm wide when fresh (in the Kalannie region), bright light golden, prolific and very showy.

Flowers. 4-merous; *sepals* 1/2-3/4-united.

Pods. Moniliform to sub-moniliform, 5-8 cm long, 3-4 mm wide, thinly crustaceous, straight to shallowly curved, glabrous, brown.

Seeds. Longitudinal in the pods, 3-4 mm long, 1.5-2.5 mm wide, dull to sub-shiny, black; *aril* white.

Taxonomy

Acacia multispicata together with *A. sessilispica* and *A. singula* (neither of which occur in the Kalannie region) form an interrelated species complex called the "*A. multispicata* group" (see Cowan and Maslin 1995 for discussion). To this group we must now add *A. affin. multispicata*, a rare species which occurs in the Kalannie region and also near Manmanning. *Acacia acuminata* and *A. jibberdingensis* (both of which occur in the Kalannie region) appear closely related to this group but are easily distinguished on account of their taller growth habit and longer phyllodes.

Variants

Acacia multispicata is a perplexingly variable species and a range-wide study is needed to help elucidate the patterns of variation (see Cowan and Maslin 1995 for discussion). Within the Kalannie region this species, however, is invariable.

Related species

Within the Kalannie region the species with which *A. multispicata* is most likely to be confused is *A. affin. multispicata*. They are superficially very similar, however, the latter is readily distinguished by its phyllodes that have 8, distinct, widely spaced nerves (best seen at x10 magnification).

Distribution

Widespread in southwest Western Australia where it ranges from Ajana south to Cranbrook and east to near Queen Victoria Rock and the Frank Hann National Park area.

Acacia multispicata is not common in the Kalannie region but it is fairly frequent in the places where it occurs. It can form small, localized population along disturbed roadverges.

Habitat

Over its geographic range this species grows mostly on sand plains in heath, scrub and shrubland.

Recorded from the following Kalannie region Land Management Units. Sand over Gravel; Pediment; Spillway Sand.

Conservation status

Not considered rare or endangered.

Flowering

Over its rather wide geographic range *A. multispicata* flowers mainly from August to October, however, flowers occasionally occur from March to July.

In the Kalannie region this species was in full flower in early September 1997.

The flowers are produced in great profusion, covering the entire plant.

Fruiting

Over its geographic range this species produces pods with mature seeds from November to January.

Plants in the Kalannie region were with mature seeds in mid-December 1996.

Pods are produced in large quantities and the seed is easily picked by hand or collected by simple shaking techniques.

Biological features

Growth characteristics. This species probably has a fairly fast growth rate. It is moderately frost tolerant according to Simmons (1987).

Propagation

Propagate from seed or cuttings according to Elliot and Jones (1982).

According to Simmons (1987) it should be pruned after flowering.

Revegetation

Although *A. multispicata* is not common in the Kalannie region it has some features that render it useful for certain revegetation purposes. This low-growing species has a dense, spreading crown, is probably fast-growing and the seeds are produced in quantity and easily collected. It would be suitable for use in areas where soil stabilisation is required, particularly on sandy or gravelly soils.

Wilcox *et al.* (1996) recommend this species for revegetation in the Midlands and northern wheatbelt regions of Western Australia for the following soil types: red or brown structured clay, deep yellow or pale yellow sand, and sand over yellow mottled clay. *Acacia multispicata* is also recommended by Lefroy *et al.* (1991) for regeneration of "Morrel" country (i.e. brown or grey, fine textured, alkaline loam grading to brown clay at depth) in the central wheatbelt region.

Utilisation

Erosion control. See Revegetation above.

Biodiversity plantings. Suitable for inclusion in biodiversity plantings as part of the low shrub stratum.

Ornamental and horticulture. This adaptable species is most ornamental on account of its prolific floral display.

References

- Cowan, R.S. and Maslin, B.R. (1995). *Acacia* Miscellany 10. New taxa and notes on previously described taxa of *Acacia*, mostly section *Juliflorae* (Leguminosae: Mimosoideae), in Western Australia. *Nuytsia* 10(1): 15-62.
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- Lefroy, E.C., Hobbs, R.J. and Atkins, L.J. (1991). *Revegetation guide to the central Wheatbelt*. (Agriculture W.A.: Western Australia.)
- Simmons, M.H. (1987). *Growing Acacias* (Kangaroo Press.)
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