

Botanical name

Acacia oswaldii (as 'Oswaldi') F.Muell., Fragm. 4: 5 (1863) [*Short phyllode variant*]

The species name commemorates F. Oswald. Little is known of this man other than he was a German who had lived in Adelaide, South Australia, for a time and when Ferdinand von Mueller described this species in honour of him.

The form of *A. oswaldii* described here from the Kalannie region is a short phyllode variant of the species.

Common name

Dwarf Miljee.

Characteristic features

Gnarled *shrubs* or *small trees* with the trunks and branches somewhat contorted. *Phyllodes* linear, short and narrow, straight, rigid, widely spreading, obscurely multi-nerved; *apices* sharply pungent by straight, needle-like points. *Heads* globular, sessile, very few-flowered. *Pods* strongly curved to openly and often irregularly coiled, broad, coriaceous to sub-woody.

Description.

Habit. Gnarled *shrubs* or *small trees* 2-3 m tall, the trunks and branches somewhat crooked and contorted, crowns 2-3 m wide and rather dense, on young plants the crowns are rounded and extend to the ground but with age they become sub-rounded and occupy 30-40% of the total plant height, trunks about 20 cm in diameter at ground level.

Bark. Grey, longitudinally fissured on trunks and main branches, branchlets smooth or sub-smooth.

Branchlets. Glabrous or sparsely and minutely appressed hairy at extremities (hairs embedded in resin and difficult to see).

Phyllodes. Linear, 10-20(-25) mm long, 1-1.5 mm wide, flat to compressed, rigid, slightly thickened when fresh (shallowly longitudinally grooved when dry), widely spreading, straight, glabrous, dull, green or greyish green; *longitudinal nerves* 3-4 or numerous on each face, obscure; *apices* tapered to sharply pungent, straight, needle-like points; pulvinus much-reduced.

Heads. Globular, sessile, very few-flowered.

Flowers. 4-merous.

Pods. Strongly curved to openly and often irregularly coiled, 5-8 cm long (expanded length), 8-12 mm wide, coriaceous to sub-woody, persisting on plants following dehiscence.

Seeds. Not seen.

Taxonomy

As will be discussed in Maslin and Cowan (in prep.) *A. oswaldii* is very polymorphic and considerable work is needed to satisfactorily resolve the complex patterns of variation that exist in this wide-spread, Arid Zone species. The entity described here from the Kalannie region differs from other plants of *A. oswaldii* by a combination of its dwarf growth habit and short, narrow, sharply pungent phyllodes.

Superficially similar species. In the Kalannie region this variant grows with *A. colletioides* and the two can look superficially similar on account of their phyllodes being short, straight, rigid, widely spreading and sharply pungent. *Acacia colletioides* is readily distinguished, however, by its large, domed growth form, its terete, 8-

nerved phyllodes (observe at x10 magnification), shortly pedunculate heads and much narrower, thinner pods.

Distribution

This short phyllode variant of *A. oswaldii* is known from only three populations, one of which occurs in the Kalannie region on the western margin of Lake Moore. The other populations occur on the eastern margin of Lake Moore (on Mouroubra Station) and on Pinnacle Station (south of Leinster, about 300 km northeast of Lake Moore). It is likely that future sampling of salt lakes in the poorly collected area between Lake Moore and Leinster will show this variant to be more common than current collections show.

Habitat

Over its range this variant occurs on the margins of salt lakes or on red clay-loam flats in salt lake country.

In the Kalannie region it grew on Colluvial Earth (in free-draining sandy loam) on a slight rise near salt lakes.

Recorded from the following Kalannie region Land Management Unit. Colluvial Flat-Earth.

Conservation status

Although this variant of *A. oswaldii* is currently known from only a few populations these occur over a relatively wide area. It is likely that future studies within the rather remote area of its geographic range will show many salt lakes supporting populations of this variant.

Flowering

The Pinnacles Station specimen was in flower in late April.

Plants in the Kalannie region were sterile in early September 1997.

Fruiting

There are no extant fruiting specimens of this species that contain seed. It is likely, however, that seed production would be irregular (probably related to the incidence and/or intensity of rainfall).

Dehisced pods commonly remain attached to the plants after the seed has dropped.

Biological features

No information available but this is likely to be a slow-growing species.

Propagation

No information available.

Revegetation

This variant of *A. oswaldii* would appear to have relatively low value for revegetation in the Kalannie region.

Utilisation

Wildlife refuge. The much-branched crown and prickly foliage could provide protection for small nesting birds.

Reference

Cowan, R.S. and Maslin, B.R. (in prep.). *Acacia* Miscellany 20. Miscellaneous new taxa and lectotypifications in *Acacia*, mostly Section *Plurinerves* (Leguminosae: Mimosoideae). [Provisional title.]