

# Field guide to the common plants of the Cooper Basin

South Australia and Queensland

**Santos**



## **FIELD GUIDE TO THE COMMON PLANTS OF THE COOPER BASIN (SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND QUEENSLAND)**

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# 1. Introduction

The Cooper Basin is a desert environment, yet supports a great diversity of plant life ranging from dense Coolibah woodlands on the floodplains, to endless expanses of low shrubs and, occasionally, wildflowers on the dunes and gibber plains.

The abundance and distribution of these plants is determined by numerous environmental factors, but most importantly by the availability of water and soil type. The redistribution of rainfall through run-off and infiltration results in some areas such as dune crests being almost devoid of moisture, and others, such as creek lines and swamps, being completely inundated.

As a result of this environmental variability, the Cooper Basin contains a large number of quite distinct "ecological niches" which are occupied by plants specifically adapted to the environmental conditions prevailing in that "niche". The region therefore supports a great diversity of plants ranging from "true" desert species inhabiting the dunefields and gibber plains to wetland species inhabiting the swamps, creeks and floodplains. The Cooper Basin is dominated by dunefields, however, and it is the "true" desert plants of this association which are the most numerous in this handbook.

Dunefield plants are extremely well adapted to desert conditions. Their life histories are governed by the very intermittent availability of moisture. They grow and reproduce opportunistically, responding rapidly to the infrequent rains. Within days of rains a growth cycle is initiated which sees ephemeral wildflowers germinate, and shrubs and trees begin to grow vigorously. Within months, reproductive cycles are completed and, as the desert dries, the ephemeral wildflowers set seed and die, leaving only the perennial, drought-resistant species to weather the next dry.

This handbook provides a non-technical guide to the most common plants of the Cooper Basin. Botanical jargon is kept to a minimum and particular emphasis is placed on photographs and drawings to assist plant identification.

A section on weeds occurring in the Cooper Basin is also included (Section 6). Legislation requires landholders to control declared pest plants on the land and waters under their control.

Rare and threatened plants occurring in the Cooper Basin are listed in Section 8. It is an offence to remove or damage the rare and threatened plants listed in the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1972, the Queensland Nature Conservation Act, 1992, and the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999.

The handbook has been produced for Santos employees and contractors to promote more informed environmental management, and to foster an appreciation of the desert plants and environment in which the Cooper Basin oil and gas fields are situated.

The first steps in realising these aims are becoming familiar with the names and appearance of the most common plants in the region, and understanding why it is more important to avoid clearance of some species as opposed to others.

## **2. User Guide**

The plants described in this handbook have been classified according to: (a) size and form, (b) scientific name, and (c) habitat.

### **2.1 Size and Form**

Based on size and form, the plants are divided into three groups: trees, shrubs and herbs. Trees are greater than 5 metres tall and generally have a single trunk, whereas shrubs are less than 5 metres tall and are often multi-stemmed from the base. Both are perennial (long-lived) plants, although trees generally live considerably longer than shrubs.

Herbs are the small, non-woody plants, which consist of two sub-groups: (a) perennial grasses, and (b) forbs (the fleshy plants). Forbs are invariably relatively short-lived. Some are ephemeral, appearing after rain and living less than a year, others are perennial, living at most a few years.

### **2.2 Scientific name**

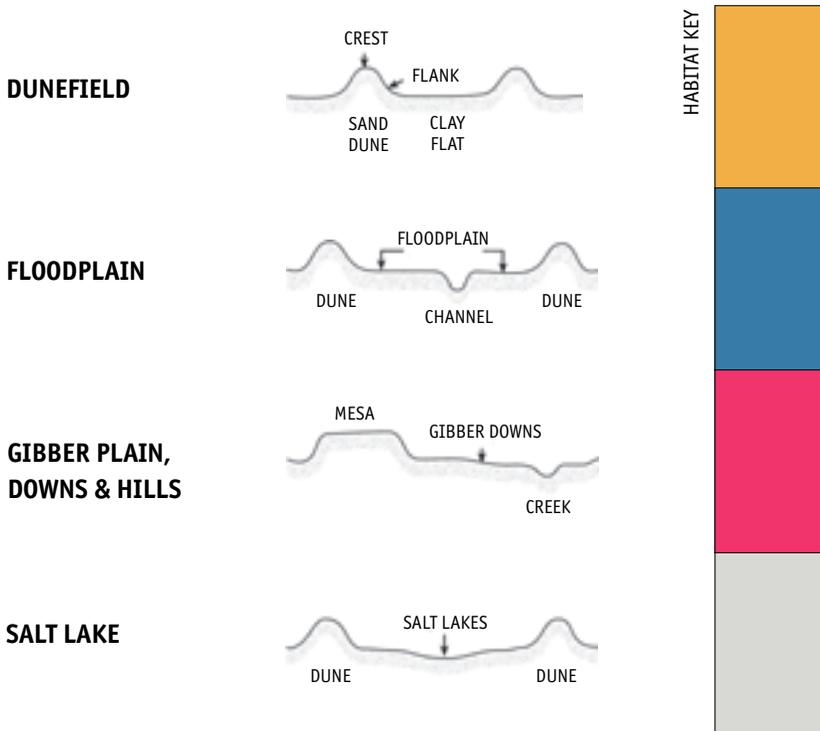
Within each of the above groups, plants are listed alphabetically according to their scientific name. Scientific names are composed of two parts; first the generic name (genus), followed by the specific name (species). Plants from the same genus are closely related and therefore usually of similar appearance. Knowing the general appearance of plants from a particular genus enables one to identify a great number

of plants to at least the level of genus. The precise identity of a plant within a genus is provided by the species name. For example, the river red gum and coolibah are both from the genus *Eucalyptus*, but are differentiated by their species names; ie. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (river red gum) and *Eucalyptus coolabah* (Coolibah).

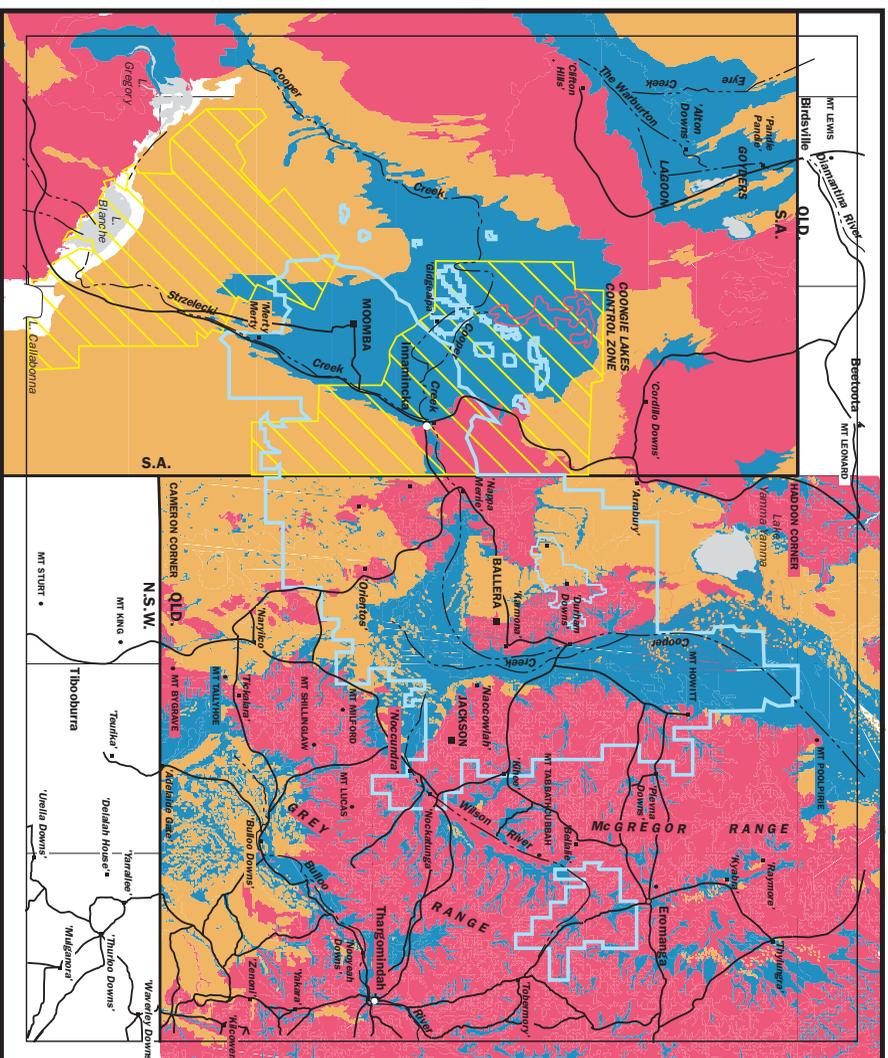
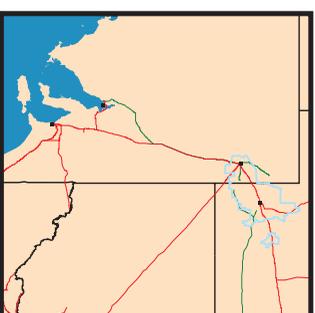
### 2.3 Habitat

A further method by which plants in this handbook have been classified is according to their habitat (ie. the type of country in which they grow). In the Cooper Basin this can either be dunefield, floodplain, gibber plain or salt lake, as shown in the adjoining map. Within each of these broad habitat types there are numerous sub-habitats, as shown in the diagrams below. Colour codes have been used to designate the predominant habitats in which plants occur (see key below) and included in the plant descriptions.

In a number of instances where plants occupy a number of habitats, more than one colour has been used. The colour codes used are as follows:



## Habitats of the Cooper Basin



 Santos Areas of Interest

**Environmental Regions**

 Dune Field

 Floodplain

 Gibber Plains, Downs & Hills

 Salt Lake

 Conservation Reserve



## 2.4 HOW TO IDENTIFY A PLANT

When attempting to identify a plant the following steps are recommended.

1. Decide whether the plant is a tree, shrub or a herb; go to the relevant section of the handbook.
2. Note in which type of country (habitat) the plant is growing; narrow the choice of plants down to those from the relevant habitat by using the colour code.
3. Compare the photographs of the most likely plants with the plant in question, taking particular note of the shape of the plant, the form, colour and texture of the trunk or stem, and the colour and shape of leaves and flowers.
4. Finally, if still uncertain, compare the drawings and descriptions of leaves, flowers, fruit and seeds with those of the plant in question.

## 2.5 CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

The final section of each plant description assigns a conservation priority to each plant species. These priorities are indicative only, and in no way relate to state or commonwealth legislation.

Characteristics of each plant, such as longevity, growth rate, regeneration rate and abundance have been taken into account when assigning conservation priorities (see section 7). The conservation priorities are as follows:

**Priority 1:** very high conservation priority;

**Priority 2:** high conservation priority;

**Priority 3:** moderate conservation priority;

**Priority 4:** low conservation priority.

These conservation priorities should be considered before clearing vegetation for seismic lines, borrow pits, roads, evaporation ponds, pipeline easements and well sites.

More detailed guidelines relating to land clearance associated with the oil and gas industry should be sought in Santos' series of handbooks on environmental management procedures, the Arid Zone Field Environmental Handbook and the Dozer Manual, or by contacting Santos environmental personnel.

## 3.1 Mulga

*Acacia aneura*

### HABITAT

A very widespread and adaptable species. Occurs on a variety of soils on sandhills, flats or plains, and rocky undulating hills and ranges. Found in dense thickets or singly.

### DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub or small tree to 10m high, and of variable habit. Branches and foliage are upright.

**Leaves** are grey-green, with a covering of short hairs.

**Flowers** are yellow, occurring in a cylindrical spike.

**Pods** are short, flat, and oblong, and the seeds almost circular.

**Flowering period** is irregular, but usually after good rains.

### NOTES

Mulga is a slow-growing, long-lived tree.

It is useful as both a shade tree and fodder plant, and is used extensively for fencing and light construction.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

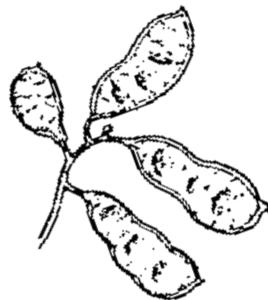


Mulga, *Acacia aneura*

HABITAT KEY



Flower



Seed-pod

## 3.2 Gidgee, Stinking wattle

*Acacia cambagei*

### HABITAT:

Occupies a wide range of habitats, including watercourses, open sandplains, dissected tableland and dunefields. Often around claypans. A relatively common tree in the Cooper Basin.

### DESCRIPTION:

A small to medium tree to 10m high, of relatively erect appearance.

**Bark** is brownish and deeply furrowed.

**Leaves** are lanceolate (lance-shaped), grey coloured and have a small bent point at the tip.

**Flowers** are yellow and are typically wattle-like.

**Pods** are flattish, hairless and almost straight edged.

### NOTES:

A slow-growing, long-lived tree.

The wood is dark-coloured, hard and durable, often being used for fence posts or as a rough construction material. Where it is available, it is the favourite timber for Aboriginal weapons.

The leaves and wattle emit a strong, offensive odour (something like household gas) when flowering and during humid or wet weather - hence the name Stinking wattle.

Gidgee is a good fuel, burning to leave a small residue of white ash which was reported to be used by Aboriginals to blend with the narcotic pituri (*Duboisia hopwoodii*).

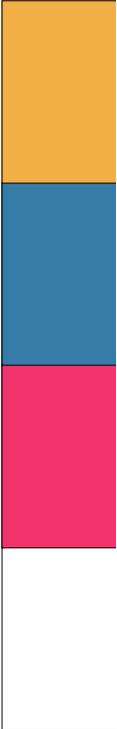
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (high conservation priority).



Gidgee, Stinking wattle, *Acacia cambagei*

HABITAT KEY



Seed-pod

Flower

### 3.3 Red mulga, Minni-ritchi *Acacia cyperophylla*

#### HABITAT:

Usually occurs along creek lines in dissected tableland. It is particularly common in the dissected tableland north of Innamincka (around Packsaddle).

#### DESCRIPTION:

Small shapely tree to 13m high.

**Bark** is reddish and is shed in curly strips (ie. Minni-ritchi in Aboriginal). This is a most distinctive taxonomic feature.

**Leaves** are long and thin.

**Pods** are narrow, oblong and brittle.

#### NOTES:

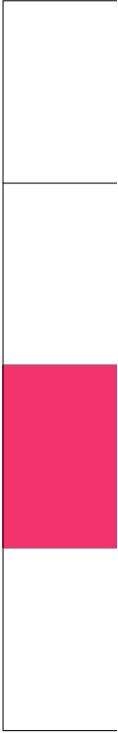
A very common and distinctive tree along most creeks north of Innamincka.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



HABITAT KEY



Red Mulga, Minni-ritchi, *Acacia cyperophylla*



Flower



Seed-pod

### 3.4 Broughton willow

*Acacia salicina*

#### HABITAT:

Found on floodplains and adjacent to drainage lines in sandy to sandy-clay soils.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Willow-like with drooping branches, growing in dense clumps to a height of 20m.

**Leaves** are long and tapering at both ends with a fine point at the tip, colour is a strong mid-green.

**Flowers** are creamy pale yellow globular heads on the ends of small stalks. The nodule clusters are green before opening.

**Fruit** occur as ashy coloured, straight, cylindrical pods.

**Flowering** period is summer to autumn.

#### NOTES:

Often occurring near watercourses this species is valuable for riverbank stabilisation and doubles as a windbreak. The bark is rich in tannin and was used by Aboriginals to poison fish.

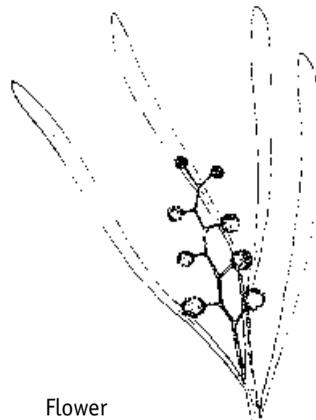
#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1:** (high conservation priority).



Broughton willow, *Acacia salicina*

HABITAT KEY



Flower

### 3.5 River cooba

*Acacia stenophylla*

#### HABITAT:

Occurs along watercourses and on swamp margins on heavy clay soils. It is quite common along the north-west branch of the Cooper.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Small to medium tree to 10m, with drooping leaves and small branches. Some specimens are quite ornamental.

**Bark** is dark grey-brown, rough and fibrous.

**Leaves** are narrow, 10-20cm long, slightly curved and relatively rigid.

The botanical name comes from the Greek *stenos*, meaning narrow and *phyllon*, meaning leaf.

**Flowers** are pale yellow.

**Pods** are 10-20cm long, leathery and strongly constricted between oblong seeds.

**Flowering period** is mostly summer to early autumn.

#### NOTES:

The timber is very hard, heavy, close grained, dark brown and polishes well.

The seeds are edible; they were often roasted and eaten by Aborigines. Sir Thomas Mitchell, on his expedition to tropical inland Australia in 1846, wrote of the species "... I found many of the same pods roasted at some fires of the natives, and learnt from our guides that they eat the pea".

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

This plant will regrow from root-stock.

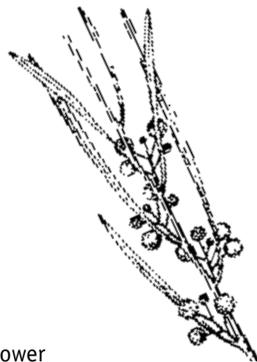


**River cooba**, *Acacia stenophylla*

Photograph courtesy of Martin O'Leary  
(Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and State Herbarium)

HABITAT KEY


Flower



Seed-pod



### 3.6 Whitewood

*Atalaya hemiglauca*

#### HABITAT:

Occurs usually in dunefields, along dune flanks and in sandy swales. In some areas such as around Della and Dullingari it is often very abundant, occurring in isolated clumps, usually with numerous root suckers.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Small tree to 5-10m, often of attractive shape and appearance. Freely suckers from the roots.

**Bark** on the lower trunk is rough, scaly and persistent, whilst on the upper trunk it is smooth and off-white to pale grey.

**Leaves** are elongate, with rounded tips and are smooth, waxy green on the upper surface (and paler below). Hemiglauca is from the Latin referring to the lighter coloured underleaf.

**Fruit** are two or three lobed, each lobe with a membranous wing.

**Flowers** are creamy-yellow and occur in large branched clusters.

**Flowering period** is from spring to early summer.

#### NOTES:

An extremely drought tolerant tree, valued for both shade and fodder.

The timber is pale and close-grained, but is soft and non-durable, often being attacked by borers. The wood is used by Aboriginals for carving artefacts.

The roots, when straightened by heat, were used by Aboriginals for spear shafts.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

Cleared or damaged trees usually recover rapidly as this plant will regrow from its root-stock.



Whitewood, *Atalaya hemiglauca*

HABITAT KEY




Flower

### 3.7 Wild orange

*Capparis mitchellii*

#### HABITAT:

Found in floodplain areas and also on rocky slopes.

Usually occurs as scattered individuals.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Bushy or small compact tree to 7m, with a dense rounded crown.

**Bark** is dark-coloured and quite rough.

**Leaves** are dull green, thick, hairy and ovate in shape.

**Flowers** are large with four white or creamy petals, about 50mm long, and prominent stamens.

**Fruit** are large globular berries, to 5cm in diameter.

**Flowering period** is late spring to summer.

#### NOTES:

An excellent fodder tree, with the leaves relished by sheep, cattle and goats. The fruit has a pleasant smell and the pulp is said to have been eaten by Aboriginal peoples.

The wood is suitable for carving and engraving and has been used to produce smokers' pipes.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1:** (ie. very high conservation priority)



Wild orange, *Capparis mitchellii*

HABITAT KEY



Flower



Spent flower and  
developing fruit

## 3.8 Bloodwood

*Corymbia tumescens*

### HABITAT:

Usually occurs on sandplains or sandy interdune flats. It occurs as scattered trees or in small clumps particularly in the Toolachee, Dullingari area.

### DESCRIPTION:

Small, often multi-stemmed tree, rarely more than 10m high.

**Bark** is mottled, rusty and grey near the base and is usually smooth and white on the upper branches.

**Leaves** are lanceolate (lance-like), pointed at the tip and have a dull yellowish tinge.

**Flowers** are cream or whitish, arising from bud clusters at the end of branchlets.

**Fruit** are ovoid and woody.

**Flowering period** is mainly in autumn to winter after good rains.

### NOTES:

Attractive tree especially when in blossom.

The timber is tough, heavy and durable.

A multi-purpose tree for the Aboriginals providing:

- honey from the flowers;
- drought water from the roots;
- food, as manna and insect galls, known as bush coconuts;
- medicine for constipation; and
- wood for implements.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

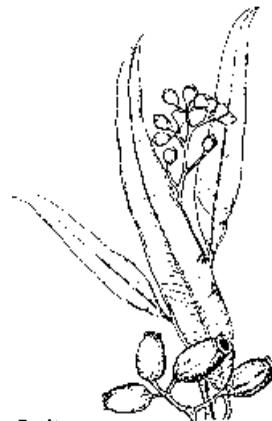
**Priority 1:** (ie. very high conservation priority).

Branches may be lopped off if necessary. Root-stock of juvenile trees should be left.



**Bloodwood, *Corymbia tumescens***

HABITAT KEY

Fruit

## 3.9 River red gum

*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (var. *obtusa*)

### HABITAT:

Found along the banks of watercourses. Very common along the permanent waterholes of the Cooper.

### DESCRIPTION:

Medium to tall tree, to 20m with large spreading crown and large trunk. It is the largest tree occurring in the Cooper Basin.

**Bark** is usually smooth and pale, more so on the upper branches than the lower trunk. The trunk may have off-white and grey patches caused by the annual shedding of flakes of bark.

**Leaves** are thin, dull blue-grey, with new growth often pinkish.

**Flowers** are cream coloured.

**Flowering period** is in early summer, although generally only in alternate years as the fruits require about a year to mature.

### NOTES:

One of the fastest growing trees in the world. With a good water supply heights of 10-15m can be obtained after a few years. Probably lives for several hundred years.

The timber is hard and durable and is often used for fence posts and other outdoor construction purposes.

A gum exuded from cuts in the bark has been used by pioneers in cough lozenges and for treatment of diarrhoea and haemorrhages. Aboriginals obtained edible grubs from its trunk and roots, and white lerp scale from its leaves.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1:** (ie. very high conservation priority).

Mature red gums should not be cleared, although branches may be broken off to allow access and line of sight. Root-stock of young trees should be left to allow rapid regeneration.



River red gum, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (var. *obtusata*)

HABITAT KEY



Fruit

## 3.10 Coolibah

*Eucalyptus coolabah*

### HABITAT:

Occurs along watercourses and on floodplains. The most common tree on the Cooper floodplain.

### DESCRIPTION:

Medium sized tree to 15m, often with spreading gnarled branches. Smaller and more gnarled where flooding is less common.

**Bark** is dark or ash-grey and fibrous.

**Leaves** are thin, dull blue-grey.

**Flowers** are white, producing small fruit.

**Flowering period** is from late summer to early winter.

### NOTES:

Most famous for the shade they provide. A slow growing tree, living probably for several hundred years.

The timber is heavy, durable and notably white ant resistant. It is used for construction, fence posts and firewood.

Aboriginals used coolibah in several ways:

- (a) the roots were used as an emergency water supply;
- (b) the inner bark was used as a snake bite treatment it was beaten, heated and applied as a poultice;
- (c) the leaves were used to poison fish in waterholes, stunning or killing them after one to several days;
- (d) grubs and lerps were collected from the trunk and leaves, respectively.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

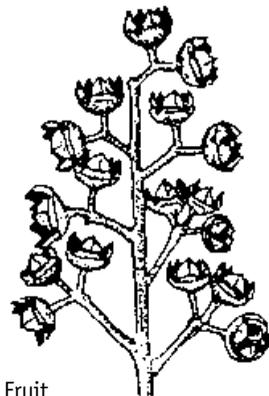
**Priority 1:** (ie. very high conservation priority).

Branches may be lopped off if necessary. Root-stock of juvenile trees should be left to allow rapid regeneration.



Coolibah, *Eucalyptus coolabah*

HABITAT KEY



Fruit

### 3.11 Yapunyah

*Eucalyptus ochrophloia*

#### HABITAT:

Occurs along the sandy and clayey banks and flats of watercourses. Often forms the dominant tree, but may also grow in conjunction with Coolibahs.

#### DESCRIPTION:

A tree to 15m high, with drooping foliage and many upright branches.

**Bark** is dark and persistent near the tree base.

**Leaves** are bright green, glossy and alternate.

**Flowers** are creamy, forming clusters at the end of the branchlets.

**Fruit** are club-shaped to cylindrical on a short stalk.

#### NOTES:

The distinguishing features of this tree are the dark, rough bark at the base of the trunk, the smooth upper trunk and branches, and the long fruits.

The timber of Yapunyah is very hard and durable. Yapunyah is a prolific producer of fine quality honey. The distribution of this species is restricted to northern New South Wales and south-western Queensland.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



**Yapunyah**, *Eucalyptus ochrophloia*

Photograph courtesy of Ken Hill (National Herbarium)

HABITAT KEY




Fruit

## 3.12 Beefwood

*Grevillea striata*

### HABITAT:

Usually occurs on sandplains or level sandy interdune areas. Relatively common in certain areas such as around the Bookabourdie pipeline. Usually found as scattered trees, rarely in groups.

### DESCRIPTION:

Medium sized tree to 12m high, of striking appearance.

**Bark** is brown, rough and deeply furrowed.

**Leaves** are very elongated and leathery.

**Flowers** are creamy-yellow.

**Fruit** consist of hard ovoid pods, about 15mm long, with an erect beak.

**Flowering period** is in summer.

### NOTES:

A slow-growing, long-lived tree. The Beefwood blazed by Charles Sturt at Depot Glen in 1845 still stands sentinel over Poole's grave.

The timber is reddish, the heartwood in fact being a similar colour to raw beef - hence the name. It is a fairly durable timber and splits readily and has therefore been used for fence posts and shingles.

Aboriginals used a dark-reddish exudate from the tree as a cement and medicinally.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1:** (ie. very high conservation priority).

As Beefwood usually occur as scattered trees, clearance should be unnecessary.

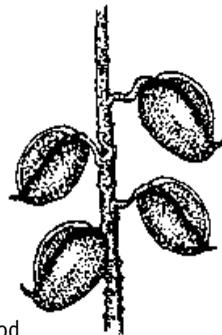


Beefwood, *Grevillea striata*

HABITAT KEY




Flower



Seed-pod

### 3.13 Bull oak

*Hakea chordophylla*

#### HABITAT:

Occurs on red sandy plains and sandy rises.

#### DESCRIPTION:

A small tree to 6 meters, with distinctly fissured bark.

**Bark** is brown, deeply fissured cork-like.

**Leaves** in cross section, are rounded and needle-like. They are bluish green and around 20-40 cm long.

**Flowers** are small and creamy white to dull yellow.

**Fruits** are hard, deep brown, woody capsules, swollen at the base and tapering slightly to the tip. The seed capsule splits in half to release seeds with papery wings.

**Flowering period** is July to September.

#### NOTES:

This species has dark hard wood that is used for woodwork and turning. An attractive species when in flower, it is an important source of nectar for many bird and insect species.

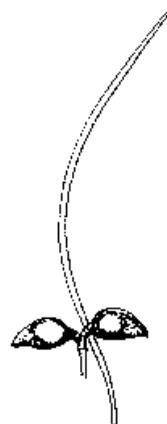
#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1** (ie. very high conservation priority).



**Bull oak, *Hakea chordophylla***

HABITAT KEY

Seed-pod and leaf

### 3.14 Straggly corkbark

*Hakea eyreana*

#### HABITAT:

Generally occur as isolated small trees on sand dunes, gibber flats or scattered along creeks or floodplains.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Shrub or tree to 7m, with an erect twisted stem.

**Bark** is deeply cracked, thick and corky.

**Leaves** are needle-like to 10cm and woolly. They are grey-green and irregularly forked.

**Flowers** are in dense clusters.

**Fruit** are wooden capsules which taper upwards into a short, sharp, brittle point.

**Flowering** period is winter to spring.

#### NOTES:

This species can be distinguished from the Corkbark tree *Hakea ivoryi*, by its shorter, more branched leaves. When ripe, each fruit splits open to release seed. The fruit is likely to persist on the tree for several years.

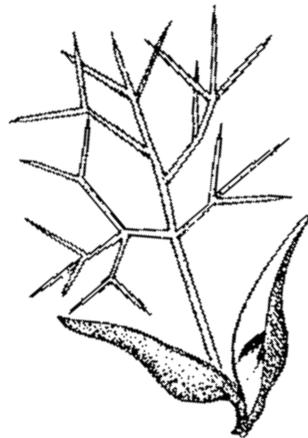
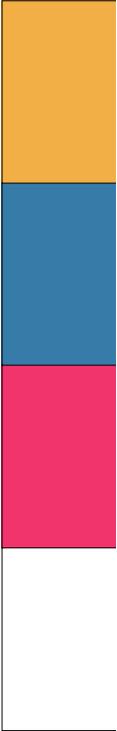
#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



Straggly corkbark, *Hakea eyreana*

HABITAT KEY



Seed-pod and leaf

### 3.15 Queensland bean tree, *Bauhinia*

*Lysiphyllum gilvum*

#### HABITAT:

Usually occurs along watercourses and on floodplains. Moderately common along the Cooper.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Small to medium sized tree to about 6m high. The foliage is generally very dense, giving the tree a bushy appearance.

**Leaves** are round and folded like butterfly wings.

**Woody pods** (containing seeds) are a very distinctive feature.

**Flowers** are creamy-white and occur in densely hairy flat-topped clusters.

**Flowering period** is in spring.

#### NOTES:

Probably a relatively slow-growing and long-lived tree.

The leaves and pods are readily eaten by stock. Aboriginals sucked the nectar directly from the flower or washed it out in water.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1:** (ie. very high conservation priority).

As bean trees usually occur as scattered trees, clearance should be unnecessary.

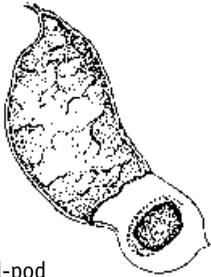


Queensland bean tree, *Bauhinia*, *Lysiphyllum gilvum*

HABITAT KEY




Flower and leaves



Seed-pod

### 3.16 River paperbark

*Melaleuca trichostachya*

#### HABITAT:

Common along the banks of permanent waterholes. Also known to occur in frequently flooded swamps near permanent watercourses.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Multi-stemmed shrub or tree with white, papery peeling bark on trunk and larger branches.

**Leaves** are long, thin and flat with a pointed tip, powdery green in colour.

**Flowers** are white, arranged in a 'bottle brush' spike near the tip of branch.

**Fruit** occur as a rusty-coloured, thin-walled, oval-shaped capsule. About 2cm in diameter.

**Flowering period** is in summer.

#### NOTES:

The boughs and limbs of larger specimens can extend out over the water of watercourses and waterholes.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1:** (ie. very high conservation priority).



River paperbark, *Melaleuca trichostachya*

HABITAT KEY




Flower



Flower, leaves  
and fruit

### 3.17 Emu apple, Sour plum

*Owenia acidula*

#### HABITAT:

Occurs mainly on sand ridges and on sandplains, often in small clumps.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Small tree to 8m, with a bushy canopy and drooping branches. Young shoots are sticky. There are frequently several stems that sucker freely from the roots. A shady and ornamental tree.

**Bark** is grey-brown and broken into blocks.

**Leaves** are like those of a pepper tree. They are bright green and composed of 9-25 lanceolate (lance-shaped) leaflets.

**Flowers** are small, greenish cream and fragrant.

**Fruit** are red, plum or apple like (15-30mm diameter) with crimson, rather acid flesh and a hard stone.

**Flowering period** is spring.

#### NOTES:

The fruit is edible and was freely eaten by Aboriginals.

The fruit is said to be refreshing when drinking water is short, although some contest that the fruit are merely bitter. One recommendation is that the fruit be buried for several days before eating.

It is a difficult tree to propagate as the seeds do not germinate readily and the root suckers are difficult to transplant.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

Sour plum regenerates from root-stock. As it usually grows as scattered trees clearance should not be necessary.



Emu apple, Sour plum, *Owenia acidula*

HABITAT KEY




Leaves, flowers  
and fruit

### 3.18 Native apricot

*Pittosporum phylliraeoides*

#### HABITAT:

Occurs on a variety of soils including sand and clay, but is usually found along drainage channels. It often occurs as a single tree or as clumps of suckers near a parent tree.

#### DESCRIPTION:

A large shrub or small tree to 6 metres, with a spreading canopy up to 4 metres wide. Often has a weeping habit when mature, and can be very attractive when fruiting.

**Bark** is whitish and mottled.

**Leaves** are dark green to olive, shiny above, dull below, and lanceolate. Leaves occur alternately along the stem.

**Flowers** are cream to pale yellow, with 5 petals and are highly fragrant. Flowers are borne in clusters between the leaves and the stem.

**Fruit** are deep orange and egg shaped. When seeds are ripe the fruit opens to reveal reddish orange seeds in a sticky pulp.

**Flowering period** is late winter to spring.

#### NOTES:

A very hardy, drought tolerant species, which is often grazed by stock. Aborigines made an infusion of leaves, seed or wood to relieve pain. Seeds were also ground to produce flour.

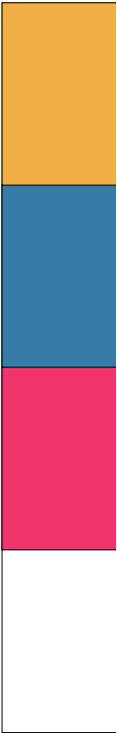
#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1** (ie. very high conservation priority).

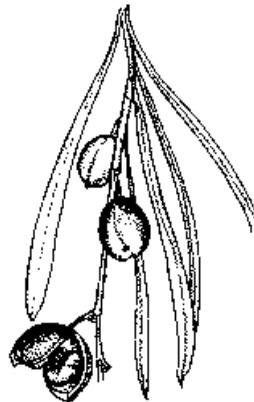


Native apricot, *Pittosporum phylliraeoides*

HABITAT KEY



Flower



Seed-pod

### 3.19 Plum bush, Sandalwood *Santalum lanceolatum*

#### HABITAT:

Found in a wide range of situations, from sandhills to rocky hills. Although widespread, tends to occur as scattered trees.

#### DESCRIPTION:

A much-branched shrub to 4m, or a tree to 7m, with drooping branches.

**Bark** is rough and brown.

**Leaves** are lance-shaped, tapered to a point. They become dull and thick when old.

**Flowers** are scented and consist of four pale-coloured segments.

**Fruit** are dark blue, plum-like and have a circular scar near the end.

**Flowering period** is spring to summer.

#### NOTES:

Like all *Santalum* species, plum bush is parasitic on the roots of other plants. The foliage is often insect ravaged. It is well-liked by stock and regarded as useful fodder.

The fruit is edible and quite sweet.

The timber yields an aromatic smoke when burnt.

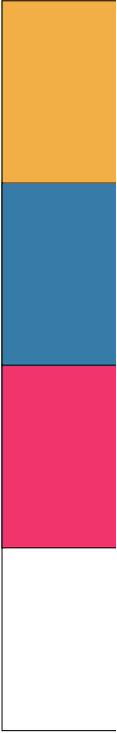
#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



Plum bush, Sandalwood, *Santalum lanceolatum*

HABITAT KEY



Leaves, fruit and flower

## 4.1 Mimosa bush, Sweet acacia *Acacia farnesiana*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on sandy loam and clay loam soils, particularly along drainage channels and roadsides.

### DESCRIPTION:

A low, much-branched thorny shrub to 7m high.

Branchlets reddish-brown in colour.

**Leaves** bipinnate, with up to 20 pairs of leaflets along the 'leaf branches'.

Spines to 30mm long are present in pairs at the base of each 'leaf branch'.

**Flowers** are bright yellow, globular and sweetly scented.

**Pods** are thick, woody and dark in colour.

**Flowering period** is irregular, but mainly winter to spring.

### NOTES:

Widely cultivated for its decorative qualities and the essential oil obtained from its flowers, used in making perfume in Mediterranean countries.

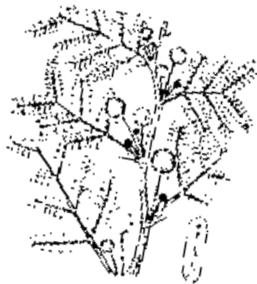
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



Mimosa bush, Sweet acacia, *Acacia farnesiana*

HABITAT KEY



Flower and leaves



Seed-pod

## 4.2 Marpoo, Sandhill wattle

*Acacia ligulata*

### HABITAT:

Very common on dune flanks and sandy interdune plains. One of the most common, medium sized shrubs in the dunefields of the Cooper Basin.

### DESCRIPTION:

Bushy, rounded shrub, 1-4m high, with spreading branches.

**Leaves** are deep green, with a rounded tip and a short, often curved point.

**Flowers** are orange-yellow, occurring in rounded heads. Typically wattle-like.

**Pods** are hard, brittle and constricted between seeds.

**Flowering period** is spring.

### NOTES:

A hardy, fast growing shrub, useful for stabilising sand dunes or as a windbreak.

Marpoo is often defoliated by rabbits to about 45cm above the ground, giving the shrubs a typically manicured look.

Kangaroos often rest beneath the overhanging branches of Marpoo.

Aboriginals mixed ash of this species with pituri (*Duboisia hopwoodii*) before using or trading this narcotic preparation. They also ate a gum produced by Marpoo and ground the seeds to make a paste which was then cooked and eaten.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

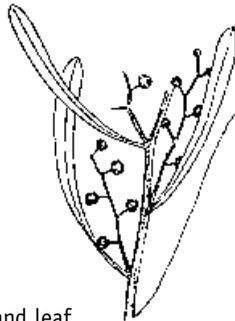
Marpoo is free seeding and regenerates rapidly under natural conditions.

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Marpoo, Sandhill wattle, *Acacia ligulata*

HABITAT KEY

Flower and leaf



Seed-pod

### 4.3 Murray's wattle, Sandplain wattle

*Acacia murrayana*

#### HABITAT:

Occurs in dunefields, along creekbanks and on floodplains. Often found in conjunction with hummock grassland and mulga communities.

#### DESCRIPTION:

Bushy shrub or small tree to 8m, with a spreading crown. Often found forming small suckering communities.

**Leaves** are pale green or ashy to 18cm long. They have one prominent vein, are rounded at the tip, and sometimes have a short point.

**Flowers** are bright yellow, in clusters of 3-7 heads.

**Pods** are flat, brown-purplish, soft and papery to 8cm long.

**Flowering period** is spring to early summer.

#### NOTES:

Named in honour of Dr. James Patrick Murray, surgeon and plant collector to the Howitt Expedition in search of Burke and Wills (1861-1862). A rapidly growing plant with profuse flowers. Sheep eat the pods, but seldom the leaves. Parrots eat the seeds, often before they mature.

#### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



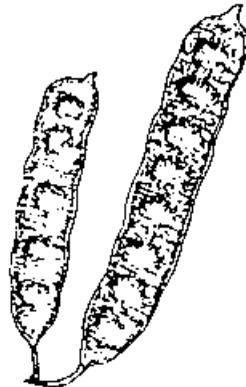
**Murray's wattle, Sandplain wattle, *Acacia murrayana***

Photograph courtesy of The Flora and Fauna of S.A. Handbooks Committee

HABITAT KEY



Flower and leaves



Seed-pod

## 4.4 Dead finish

*Acacia tetragonophylla*

### HABITAT:

Usually occurs on sandplains or sandy interdune flats.

### DESCRIPTION:

Tall, many branched shrub or small tree, to 4m high. Can be single or multi-stemmed.

**Leaves** are slender, needle-like and sharply pointed. They are actually four-sided, hence the botanical name.

**Flowers** are deep yellow, occurring in globular heads.

**Pods** are slightly woody, much curved or twisted and are constricted between the seeds.

**Flowering period** is spring.

### NOTES:

Regarded as a useful soil binder in sandy areas. It is a very drought resistant species. Its colloquial name presumes it would be the last species to succumb.

Regeneration may be somewhat limited since only small amounts of seed appear to be set despite heavy flowering. Nevertheless, in places, numerous seedlings have been observed after a series of good years.

Like several other wattles, the seeds of this species were ground into a floury paste by Aborigines, cooked and eaten. The bark and roots were infused to produce a liquid that was drunk for coughs and colds.

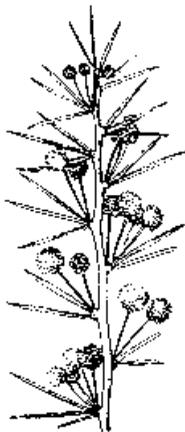
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



Dead finish, *Acacia tetragonophylla*

HABITAT KEY

Flower and leaves



Seed-pod

## 4.5 Prickly wattle, Elegant wattle

*Acacia victoriae*

### HABITAT:

Quite variable. Occurs on sand dunes, sandplains, around waterholes, on heavy clay soils, alluvial outwash plains and along creek lines. Can occur as dense thickets or singly.

### DESCRIPTION:

Erect shrub or small tree, to 4m high, sometimes with a somewhat brambly appearance.

**Leaves** are grey-green, rounded at the tip and often with a short stiff point.

Spines (2), to 8mm, usually present on the branch at the base of the leaf.

**Flowers** are pale-cream to bright yellow, occurring in round globular heads. Typically wattle-like.

**Pods** are flattish and straight, and the seeds are almost globular.

**Flowering period** is late spring to summer.

### NOTES:

A rather short-lived species, lasting only 10-15 years in central Australia. Seedlings grow rapidly, being protected from grazing to a certain extent by the sharp spines.

It is reported that Prickly wattle can withstand clipping, and hence can be used as a hedge plant or for windbreaks.

Aboriginals eat the edible gum.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).

Prickly wattle will tolerate branches being broken off and recovers rapidly.



Prickly wattle, Elegant wattle, *Acacia victoriae*

HABITAT KEY



Flower and leaves



Seed-pod

## 4.6 Old man saltbush

*Atriplex nummularia*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on clay soils, usually in flat or low lying situations such as in dune swales and on floodplains. Also occurs in salt lakes. A very common plant around Moomba.

### DESCRIPTION:

A large grey, scaly shrub with brittle woody branches, attaining a height of 2m.

**Leaves** are small, grey-blue, almost circular, with the margins often shallowly toothed.

**Flowers** occur in clusters at the end of branches. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants.

**Fruit** are nearly round or fan-shaped (5-8mm) with the upper margin toothed.

**Flowering period** is mainly spring to early summer.

### NOTES:

The largest of the saltbushes. It is long-lived, has a deep robust root system and can withstand severe droughts or shallow flooding for lengthy periods.

Old man saltbush has been cultivated for a number of purposes, including windbreaks and for rehabilitation of scalds. It is reported to be easily propagated from seed or cuttings.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

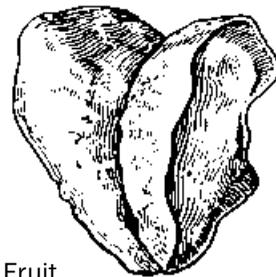
Old man saltbush appears to be very slow to regenerate, although regeneration has been noted on areas cleared 15-20 years ago, for example the Gidgealpa pipeline easement.

Often grows in dense stands, thereby making clearance unavoidable at times.



Old man saltbush, *Atriplex nummularia*

HABITAT KEY



Fruit

## 4.7 Bladder saltbush

*Atriplex vesicaria*

### HABITAT:

Extremely variable. Occurs in a variety of habitats including sandplains, interdune claypans, gibber plains, floodplains, dissected tableland, alluvial fans and salt lakes. One of the most common small shrubs in the Cooper Basin.

### DESCRIPTION:

Small, bushy shrub to 70cm high and wide, with brittle woody stems.

**Leaves** are grey-green with a whitish, powdery surface, oval shaped, occasionally toothed.

**Flowers** occur in slender dense spikes at the ends of the branchlets (male). Female flowers are less conspicuous.

**Fruit** are circular (8-15mm), usually almost concealed by large spongy appendages. Vesicles are the holes in spongy tissue, hence its botanical name.

**Flowering period** is variable, although mainly spring and summer.

### NOTES:

A relatively long-lived plant (20-30 years) which appears to be well adapted to a range of habitats.

It has a high degree of drought tolerance. Prolific quantities of seed are produced in good seasons.

It has been used successfully in the revegetation of soft scalds. However, regeneration in stony desert soil where topsoil has been lost is reported to be poor.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

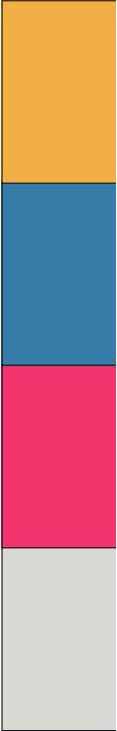
**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).

Regeneration after clearance can be rapid (depending on rainfall).



Bladder saltbush, *Atriplex vesicaria*

HABITAT KEY



Fruit

## 4.8 Native currant

*Canthium latifolium*

### HABITAT:

Usually found on shallow stony soils such as gibber flats and plains. Sometimes found in sandy interdune flats in Mulga communities.

### DESCRIPTION:

Hairless shrub or small tree 2-3m high with branches set horizontally out from the trunk.

**Leaves** are broadly ovate (oval-shaped) or lanceolate (lance-shaped), dry and leathery to touch, a bright to dull lime green colour.

**Flowers** are white, fragrant clusters often hidden by leaves. The individual flowers are funnel-shaped with 5 lobes each.

**Fruit** are currant-like compressed and globular in appearance. Containing 1-2 one-seeded stones.

**Flowering period** is irregular from spring to summer.

### NOTES:

This species grows in scattered groups of a few plants. It does most of its growing during winter and spring. Fruits are often not produced, especially in drought times.

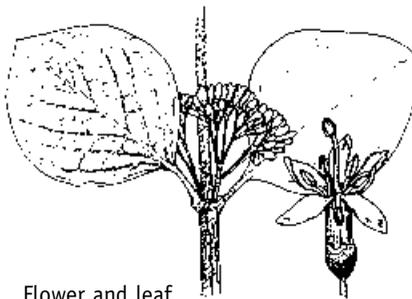
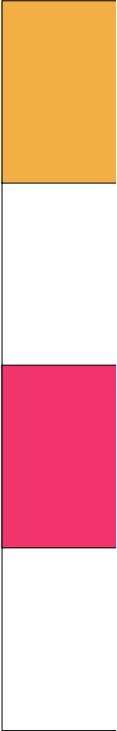
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

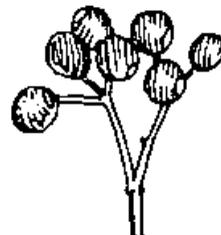


Native currant, *Canthium latifolium*

HABITAT KEY



Flower and leaf



Fruit

## 4.9 Golden goosefoot *Chenopodium auricomum*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on floodplains, river flats and low lying areas. Always on clayey soils. Usually occurs as scattered plants, only occasionally forming dense local stands.

### DESCRIPTION:

Bluish-green shrub to 1.5m high, with erect branched stems.

**Leaves** are oblong, 2-5cm long and alternate.

**Flowers** are small and golden and occur in dense globular clusters.

**Fruit** consist of a small black seed encased in a papery envelope.

**Flowering period** is winter to spring.

### NOTES:

Is not readily grazed by stock, but is generally regarded as useful, drought resistant fodder.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Golden goosefoot, *Chenopodium auricomum*

HABITAT KEY



Flower and leaves



Fruit

## 4.10 Nitre bush, Nitre goosefoot

*Chenopodium nitrariaceum*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on floodplains, river flats and on low lying areas subject to occasional inundation. Always on clayey soils. A common plant around Moomba.

### DESCRIPTION:

Greyish shrub to 2.5m high, with slender, rigid, somewhat spiny branches.

**Leaves** are green to grey, elongated, blunt and often clustered.

**Flowers** are small and occur in dense clusters.

**Fruit** consist of a small black seed encased in a papery envelope.

**Flowering period** is throughout the year.

### NOTES:

A very common shrub which can be the dominant plant over extensive local areas.

Can withstand almost complete inundation for considerable periods and is very drought tolerant.

It is a valuable fodder plant for cattle during periods of drought.

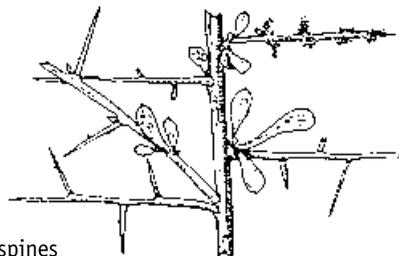
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Nitre bush, Nitre goosefoot, *Chenopodium nitrariaceum*

HABITAT KEY



Leaves and spines

## 4.11 Bluebush pea, Loose-flowered rattlepod

*Crotalaria eremaea*

### HABITAT:

Generally occurs on dune flanks and crests. A prolific coloniser of disturbed ground such as pipeline easements and seismic tracks.

### DESCRIPTION:

Dense, bluey-grey, woody perennial forb to about 1m high.

**Leaves** are variable in form but often consist of small, folded leaflets that are grey-green and quite downy on the under surface.

**Flowers** are yellow, pea-like and occur in dense clusters at the ends of branches and stems.

**Fruit** occur as club-shaped pods that 'rattle' when dry.

**Flowering period** is in spring.

### NOTES:

A relatively short-lived species, living no more than a few years. Has a system of underground 'roots' from which the plant regenerates.

It is an opportunistic coloniser of disturbed dune flanks and crests and is therefore an important soil binder and dune stabiliser.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority)

Bluebush pea regenerates quickly and is often the primary coloniser of pipeline easements and seismic lines where they cross dunes.

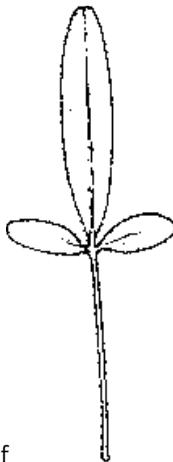


Bluebush pea, Loose-flowered rattlepod, *Crotalaria eremaea*

HABITAT KEY




Flower



Leaf



Seed-pod

## 4.12 Hop bush

*Dodonaea viscosa ssp. angustissima*

### HABITAT:

Usually occurs on dunes or in sandy interdune flats. Very common around Della, Dullingari and Toolachee.

### DESCRIPTION:

Medium sized, many-stemmed shrub, 1-2m high.

**Leaves** are elongated, glossy green and slightly sticky, sometimes shallowly and irregularly lobed.

**Flowers** are inconspicuous. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants.

**Fruit** occur as a small (10mm) reddish or purplish capsule, with usually vertical wings.

**Flowering period** is mainly spring to summer.

### NOTES:

Hop bush is a very hardy and aggressive plant, readily dispersing and colonising dunes. Pastoralists regard it as a nuisance since it often forms thick stands and suppresses pasture species.

Pioneers used the fruits of Hop bush to 'bitter' beer, as a substitute for brewing hops.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).

Hop bush regenerates rapidly.



Hop bush, *Dodonaea viscosa* ssp. *angustissima*

HABITAT KEY


Leaf



Fruit



## 4.13 Ruby saltbush

*Enchylaena tomentosa*

### HABITAT:

A widespread species which occurs on practically every soil type and in many vegetation communities.

### DESCRIPTION:

A straggling perennial shrub to 1m high.

**Leaves** are slender and succulent and covered with short stiff hairs.

**Flowers** are small and occur singly in the leaf axils.

**Fruit** are succulent and either green, yellow or red. When dry they are black.

**Flowering period** is most of the year, but mainly spring to early summer.

### NOTES:

Ruby saltbush is commonly found growing at the bases of trees, where it survives even in droughts.

The succulent berries are edible when ripe.

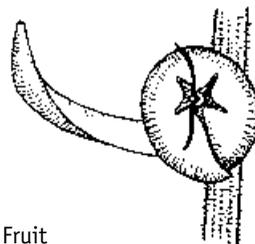
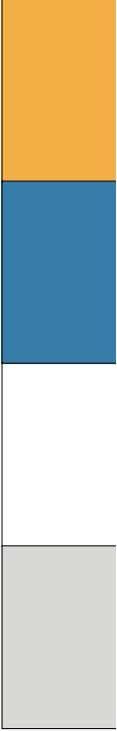
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Ruby saltbush, *Enchylaena tomentosa*

HABITAT KEY



Fruit

## 4.14 Eurah, *Bignonia emu bush*

*Eremophila bignoniiflora*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on periodically flooded, heavy clay soils of river and creek floodplains, in drainage lines and near lakes.

### DESCRIPTION:

A tall shrub or small tree 2-7m tall, with a dense rounded crown.

**Bark** is dark-grey, rough and segmented into squares when old.

**Leaves** are thin, pale green, and sometimes toothed towards their ends. They are up to 18cm in length.

**Flowers** are broadly bell-shaped and cream-coloured with purple spots on the inside.

**Fruit** are ovoid and fleshy.

**Flowering period** is May to November.

### NOTES:

Common over extensive areas in some localities. Readily eaten by sheep. The fruits are eaten by emus. The fruits were also used by Aboriginal peoples as a purgative and the leaves as a laxative.

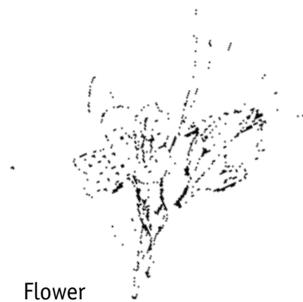
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Eurah, Bignonia emu bush, *Eremophila bignoniiflora*

HABITAT KEY

Flower

## 4.15 Desert fuchsia

*Eremophila dalyana*

### HABITAT:

Found in gibber plains and other rocky situations.

### DESCRIPTION:

A broom-like shrub or small tree 1-7m tall.

**Leaves** are grey-green, narrow, 1-10cm long and curved outwards at the ends.

**Flowers** are bell-shaped, pinkish-lilac to white, and solitary or paired.

**Fruit** are ovoid and beaked, hard, and to 1cm long.

**Flowering period** is mainly July to October.

### NOTES:

Eremophilas are very common in the arid zone, and there is a large variety of species. They can be divided into two groups, depending on whether they are adapted to bird or insect pollination. The shape and light-colour of the flower of this species indicates it is insect pollinated. The leaves of this species are very aromatic.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



## 4.16 Emu bush

*Eremophila longifolia*

### HABITAT:

Occurs usually in interdune clay and sand flats or on sand plains. Usually occurs in clumps as seedlings. Develops readily from both root suckers and by setting seed.

### DESCRIPTION:

A tall, attractive shrub, 3-7m high, with drooping branches and foliage.

**Bark** on mature specimens is dark grey, rough and divided into squarish segments.

**Leaves** are dull green, narrow and elongated, with a hooked or bent point, downy when young and becoming smooth with age.

**Flowers** are pinkish to reddish-brown and spotted inside. Each flower is tubular, slightly curved and expands into 5 lobes (like petals).

**Fruit** are blackish-purple, succulent and about 5-12mm long.

### NOTES:

The common name is derived from emu eating the fruit.

The botanical name comes from the Greek eremophiles, meaning desert-loving, and the Latin words longus, long, and folius, a leaf.

Stock readily eat the foliage. Aboriginals used the leaves for tanning skins.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

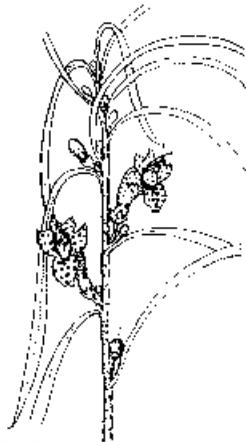
**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).

Emu bush will regenerate from root-suckers.

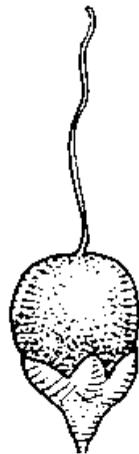


Emu bush, *Eremophila longifolia*

HABITAT KEY

Flower and leaves



Fruit

## 4.17 Spotted emu bush

*Eremophila maculata* (var. *maculata*)

### HABITAT:

Generally occurs in areas receiving runoff water on the floodplains of rivers and creeks.

### DESCRIPTION:

Densely branched shrub to 2.5m high. Occurs as scattered plants or may be locally abundant.

**Leaves** are dull green to bluish-green and tapered at both ends.

**Flowers** vary in colour from yellow to red, and are spotted on the inside and have 'S' shaped stalks.

**Fruit** are hard and rounded.

**Flowering period** is mainly May to November.

### NOTES:

This plant is known to be extremely toxic to travelling or hungry stock.

The toxic compounds are at their highest levels in young leaves after summer rains.

The leaves of this plant were said to have been used by Aboriginal peoples as a 'blister' for colds.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

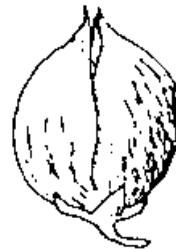


Spotted emu bush,  
*Eremophila maculata* (var. *maculata*)

HABITAT KEY



Flower



Fruit

## 4.18 Flowering lignum

*Eremophila polyclada*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on clay soils of floodplains, gibber downs and in low lying areas generally.

### DESCRIPTION:

Shrub to 3m, very densely and intricately branched.

**Leaves** are dull green, linear and smooth.

**Flowers** are white with dull greenish or brownish spots. They are bell-shaped.

**Fruit** are oblong, beaked and 10-15mm long.

**Flowering period** is mainly spring and autumn.

### NOTES:

This species is browsed by cattle and sheep in dry times, but provides little forage.

Flowering lignum is sometimes confused with the true lignum, *Muehlenbeckia florulenta*, but can be distinguished by its conspicuous white flowers and its larger fruits.

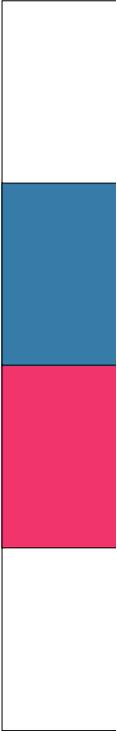
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Priority 2: (ie. high conservation priority).



Flowering lignum, *Eremophila polyclada*

HABITAT KEY



Flower



Fruit

## 4.19 Bristly sea-heath

*Frankenia serpyllifolia*

### HABITAT:

Usually associated with sandy and saline soils. Commonly found on floodplains and around lakes. Often associated with Black box, Bladder saltbush and Mitchell grass communities.

### DESCRIPTION:

A small rounded shrub to about 30 cm high, and 50 cm in diameter.

**Leaves** are bluish green and occur opposite one another along the stem. Both sides of the leaf are hairy and the leaf edges curve slightly downward.

**Flowers** have five pink petals and borne in leafy clusters.

**Fruit** consist of small brown capsules containing 2-3 seeds.

**Flowering period** is mainly spring.

### NOTES:

A highly attractive and conspicuous plant when in flower. There are many species of *Frankenia* in the area that look similar, but are less common.

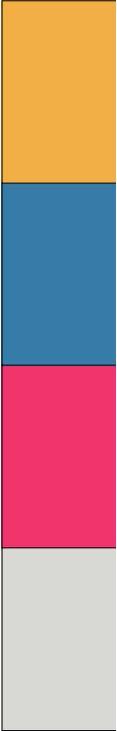
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4** (ie. low conservation priority).



4.19 Bristly sea-heath, *Frankenia serpyllifolia*

HABITAT KEY



Flower and leaves



Flower

## 4.20 Honey suckle spider-flower *Grevillea juncifolia*

### HABITAT:

Occurs in dunefield areas and sandplains.

### DESCRIPTION:

A bushy shrub to 2m, sometimes higher.

**Leaves** are alternate, thin, erect and spine-like, about 10-25cm in length and extend from the ends of thin branches.

**Flowers** are golden-orange, downy and tubular in shape, and occur in clusters up small sub-branches.

**Fruit** are hard, rounded, flattened capsules 2.5cm long.

**Flowering period** is mainly during spring.

### NOTES:

This species often grows in isolation enabling avoidance in most cases. When flowering, the flowers often contain large quantities of nectar. This shrub is also able to recover quite readily after fires.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority)



Honey suckle spider-flower, *Grevillea juncifolia*

HABITAT KEY




Flower and leaves



Seed-pod

## 4.21 Fern leaf grevillea, Golden parrot tree

*Grevillea pteridifolia*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on a wide range of soil types, and even occurs in boggy swamps. More often though, it occurs on free draining sandy soils.

### DESCRIPTION:

Occurs as a large shrub or open, slender, erect tree to around 9 metres.

**Leaves** are green on top, silvery underneath, and highly divided.

**Flowers** are bright orange and brush-like. They are relatively large compared to the leaves.

**Fruit** consist of brown oval shaped seed pods, heavily divided down the middle and containing two seeds.

**Flowering Period** is winter and spring.

### NOTES:

The flowers of this plant contain a large amount of nectar. They were soaked in water by Aborigines to produce a sweet drink. This species is commonly used in horticulture to develop garden hybrids such as grevillea 'honey gem'.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 1** (ie. very high conservation priority).



4.21 Fern leaf grevillea, Golden parrot tree, *Grevillea pteridifolia*

HABITAT KEY



## 4.22 Sandhill spider-flower *Grevillea stenobotrya*

### HABITAT:

Common on dunes and in swales. Often occurs in small groups on dune crests.

### DESCRIPTION:

A bushy shrub or short-trunked tree 1-5m high, densely and intricately branched.

**Leaves** are erect, light green to grey-green, 7-25cm long.

**Flowers** are white or cream, on dense spikes, 5-14cm long at the ends of branches.

**Fruit** are hard, rounded, flattened capsules, about 12mm across, with a short curved beak.

**Flowering period** is July to December.

### NOTES:

Not known to be grazed by stock. Aboriginal name 'inma' (Pitjantjatjara) refers to use of the fruiting branches in corroborees as rhythmic rattles.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

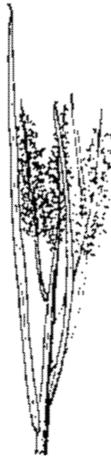
**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



Sandhill spider-flower, *Grevillea stenobotrya*

HABITAT KEY


Flower and leaves



Fruit



## 4.23 Needlewood

*Hakea leucoptera*

### HABITAT:

Usually occurs on level sandy interdune areas, often as single isolated trees.

### DESCRIPTION:

Small tree to 5m with an open branched crown, or quite often a bushy shrub to about 2m.

**Leaves** are needle-like (ie. are rigid and cylindrical with a sharp tip).

**Flowers** are white and hairless.

**Fruit** consist of a woody capsule, swollen at the base and tapering to a point at the top (opening in halves longitudinally). It has a pale coloured seed wing, hence the botanical name derived from the Greek leucos, white and pteron, a wing.

**Flowering period** is in late spring to summer.

### NOTES:

Likely to be slow growing and long-lived. Under suitable conditions root suckers develop, although this appears to be rare around Moomba.

The timber is reddish-brown, close grained, and very hard. It is used occasionally for wood carving and turning. The roots have been used for the manufacture of smoking pipes.

Aboriginals used the roots as a source of water; they were dug up and one end was placed in a slow fire to force water from the other.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

Needlewood sometimes occurs in dense stands making clearance unavoidable at times. It regenerates rapidly from root-suckers when conditions are suitable.



Needlewood, *Hakea leucoptera*

HABITAT KEY




Flower



Seed-pod

## 4.24 Samphire

*Halosarcia indica*

### HABITAT:

Always occurs in salty conditions in a variety of habitats, including salt lake margins, open clay plains and sometimes on gibber plains. It is common on the Cooper floodplain, especially around Coongie.

### DESCRIPTION:

Leafless, grey-green or olive shrub to 1m high, with jointed stems and branches composed of numerous segments. Dry stems are very brittle.

**Fruiting spikes** occur at the ends of the branches. Flowers and fruiting bodies are hidden between the segments of the fruiting spikes.

**Flowering period** is in summer.

### NOTES:

In certain locations it is very common and may dominate the vegetation. It is a slow-growing, long-lived shrub.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

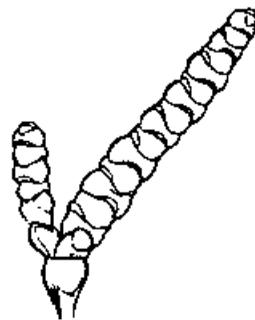
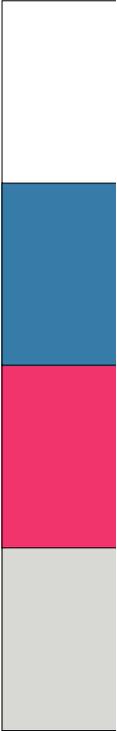
Regeneration is slow.

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Samphire, *Halosarcia indica*

HABITAT KEY



Fruiting spike

## 4.25 Tangled lechenaultia *Lechenaultia divaricata*

### HABITAT:

Found on sandplains and dunefields usually with red sandy soils and open Mulga communities.

### DESCRIPTION:

Apparently leafless shrub consisting of a tangled arrangement of stems, 30-60cm high.

**Leaves** exist as small leaf-like structures at the base of branchlets.

**Flowers** have a yellow base with the main petals being white. The petals have slightly jagged edges.

**Fruit** appears as a pod-like cylindrical capsule 1-2.5cm long, narrowed to a long beak at the tip, containing 1-4 oblong seeds.

**Flowering period** is mainly spring to autumn.

### NOTES:

Mostly occurring as scattered bushes, rarely becoming abundant. This distribution should allow avoidance in most cases. Roots were apparently eaten by Aboriginals.

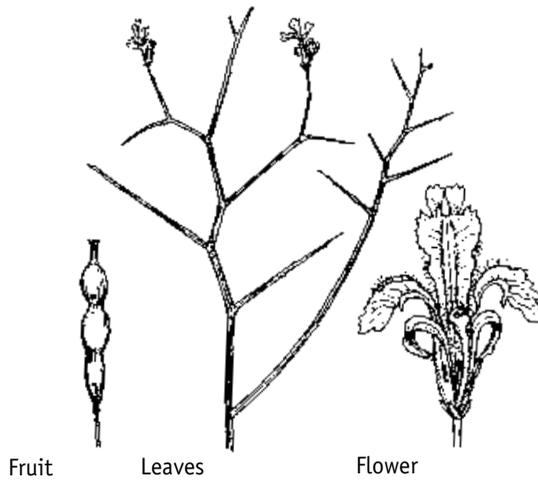
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).



Tangled lechenaultia, *Lechenaultia divaricata*

HABITAT KEY

## 4.26 Lignum

*Muehlenbeckia florulenta*

### HABITAT:

Occurs in swamps, along the edges of watercourses and on floodplains. Very abundant along the Cooper and in its associated swamps. It often occurs in dense stands that restrict access.

### DESCRIPTION:

A medium sized shrub, to 2.5m high, with very slender, tangled branches and branchlets.

**Leaves** are dull green, linear (narrow and elongated) or lanceolate (lance-shaped), but rarely remain for long.

**Flowers** are small, yellowish, occurring in clusters along the branchlets.

**Fruit** are top-shaped, dry and 5mm long.

**Flowering period** is throughout most of the year.

### NOTES:

A relatively long-lived shrub that can lie dormant for long periods of drought. After burning or damage, regeneration of lignum can be rapid following flooding. However, when root-stock is removed, regeneration is much slower. It appears to be a relatively irregular coloniser.

Lignum swamps are favoured breeding sites for many species of water birds.

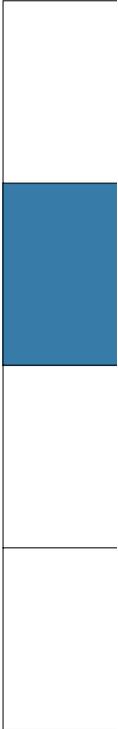
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 2:** (ie. high conservation priority).

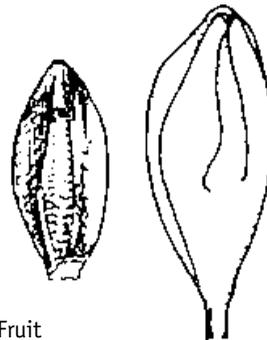
Lignum will regrow relatively rapidly if root-stock is left. If root-stock is removed regeneration is slow.



HABITAT KEY



Lignum, *Muehlenbeckia florulenta*



Fruit

## 4.27 Spiny saltbush, Thorny saltbush

*Rhagodia spinescens*

### HABITAT:

A variable species that occupies a number of different habitats. Most frequently found on loams and clay loams, but also common on heavy clays.

### DESCRIPTION:

An intricately branched shrub to 1.5m, with straight rigid branches, which sometimes become spiny.

**Leaves** are mealy-white or greenish and small.

**Flowers** are short spikes.

**Fruit** are pink or red berries, 4-6mm in diameter.

**Flowering period** is most of the year, but mainly spring to summer.

### NOTES:

Moderately palatable to stock, but browsed heavily only when other forage is scarce.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Spiny saltbush, Thorny saltbush, *Rhagodia spinescens*

HABITAT KEY



Fruits and leaves



Fruit

## 4.28 Buckbush, Roly-poly

*Salsola kali*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on a wide range of soils and in most vegetation communities. It is a common plant of disturbed areas, particularly on sandy soils.

### DESCRIPTION:

A very variable plant which occurs as annual herbs or dwarf shrubs to 70cm.

**Leaves** to 30mm long with a prickly point.

**Flowers** are stalkless, usually occurring singly in the leaf axis.

**Fruit** consist of a horizontal wing with 5 segments.

**Flowering period** is spring to autumn.

### NOTES:

Shrubs die off after one or two years of growth and often break off at the base and blow away intact, gathering in large masses along fences. Buckbush is often the first species to appear on bare or cultivated soil after drought.

This is an introduced species which is believed to be European in origin.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



Buckbush, Roly-poly, *Salsola kali*

HABITAT KEY



Fruit

## 4.29 Silver cassia

*Senna artemisioides* (*ssp artemisioides*)

### HABITAT:

Occurs in dunefields, sandplains and, less often, on gibber plains.

### DESCRIPTION:

Small to medium shrub 1-3m high, sometimes suckering and forming dense colonies. Often sparse and weak-looking.

**Leaflets** occur in pairs along branches, each tapering to a finely hooked point.

**Flowers** are yellow, occurring in small clusters of 3-10 flowers. Have five unequal sized petals.

**Fruit** consist of flat, papery pods.

**Flowering period** is mainly late winter to spring.

### NOTES:

Appears to be a fast-growing, short-lived species. Tends to lose leaves when conditions are dry.

Abundance has increased since European settlement probably due to the effects of over-stocking or lack of periodic fires.

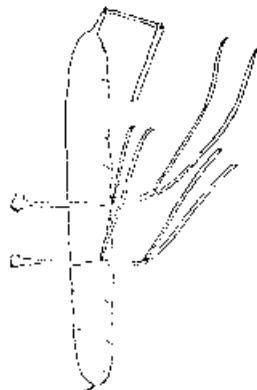
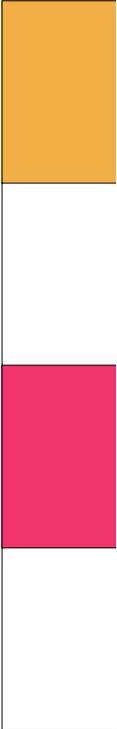
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 3:** (ie. moderate conservation priority).



Silver cassia, *Senna artemisioides* (ssp *artemisioides*)

HABITAT KEY



Leaves and fruit

## 5.1 Mulga grass, Kerosene grass *Aristida contorta*

### HABITAT:

Widespread and common on stable sandy plains and dunefields, often under mulga communities.

### DESCRIPTION:

A densely tufted annual or short-lived perennial grass to 35cm high.

**Stems** are numerous, weak and branched.

**Leaves** to 9cm long and 0.5mm wide, narrowly inrolled.

**Flowerhead** is loose with narrow spikelets, and straw-coloured when mature.

**Flowering period** is throughout the year, but mainly in spring and autumn.

### NOTES:

Regarded as a valuable source of forage, although old growth is not readily eaten by stock. Its persistence in pasture gives it some value as a soil binder. The long pointed seeds can cause injury to stock.

The name 'kerosene grass' is in reference to the extreme flammability of the plant when dry.

Abundance has increased since European settlement probably due to the effects of over-stocking or lack of periodic fires.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



**Mulga grass, Kerosene grass, *Aristida contorta***

Photograph courtesy of Trevor Hall  
(Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)

HABITAT KEY




Seed

## 5.2 Barley Mitchell grass

*Astrebla pectinata*

### HABITAT:

Occurs mainly on the heavy soils associated with floodplain areas. Also found in gibber terrain.

### DESCRIPTION:

Slender or coarse compact perennial grass forming compact tussocks 15-120cm high.

**Stems** are upright, smooth and much-branched.

**Leaves** are flat, bluish-green and fine-pointed, with rough and sharp edges.

**Flowers** are compact with closely overlapping spikelets in two regular rows.

**Flowering period** is mainly spring to autumn.

### NOTES:

Barley Mitchell grass is very similar to curly Mitchell grass, *Astrebla lappacea*, and is only readily distinguished when in flower. Barley Mitchell grass has a much broader and denser flower spike than the open arrangement of the curly mitchell grass.

Pastures of Mitchell grass are used for grazing of domestic stock. The seeds of Mitchell grass were collected by Aboriginal peoples and ground into a paste which was cooked and eaten.

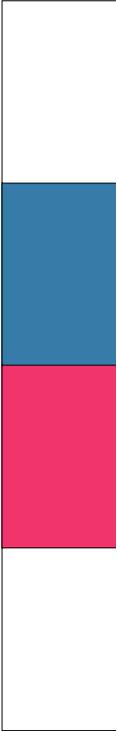
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



Barley Mitchell grass, *Astrelba pectinata*

HABITAT KEY



Seed-head

Spikelet

## 5.3 Swamp canegrass

*Eragrostis australasica*

### HABITAT:

Occurs in low lying areas subject to intermittent flooding, such as swamps and claypans. Particularly suited to slightly saline, heavy clay soils.

### DESCRIPTION:

Erect, cane-like perennial grass, to 3m high. Stems are very stout and branched at the nodes.

**Leaves** are infrequently scattered along the stems. They are slender, short, somewhat stiff and often bluish-green.

**Flowerheads** occur as loose, pyramid shaped clusters of flowers.

**Flowering period** is mainly spring.

### NOTES:

On some of the more saline soils canegrass grows almost exclusively. Pioneers frequently used canegrass as thatch for sheds, outbuildings, meathouses and fences, for which purposes it has proved to be effective and long-lasting.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

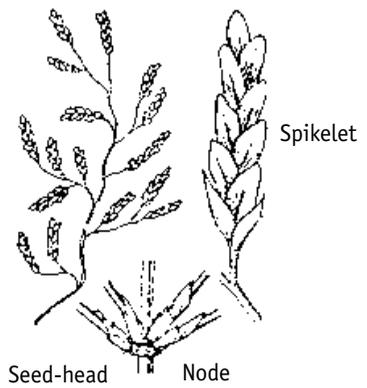
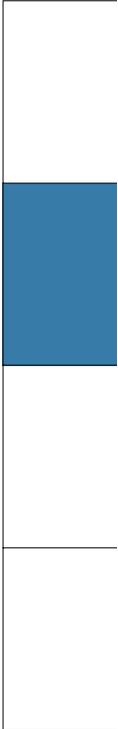
Swamp canegrass should be driven over rather than cleared so as to leave root-stock.

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



Swamp canegrass, *Eragrostis australasica*

HABITAT KEY



## 5.4 Nardoo

*Marsilea drummondii*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on the margins of claypans, swamps, waterholes and water-filled depressions. Grows on wet soil around pond margins as waters recede. Dies when soil dries.

### DESCRIPTION:

Small perennial fern to 30cm high.

**Fronds** (leaves) are clover-like with four broad leaflets at the end of stalks 2-30cm long.

Spores are contained in small fruiting bodies (sporocarps), (4-9mm long) borne on stalks (8-35mm long) that arise at the base of the fronds. Spores are reported to be released from the late spring to autumn.

### NOTES:

At times of good rainfall or flooding, Nardoo is very common in the Cooper Basin. It grows rapidly in response to favourable moisture conditions and dies soon after ephemeral ponds dry up.

Nardoo was an important food source for Aboriginals. Sporocarps were collected and ground to a flour which was mixed with water to form a dough, cooked and eaten. The nutritive value of the flour, however, appears to be low. Burke and Wills starved on a diet consisting largely of Nardoo.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



**Nardoo**, *Marsilea drummondii*

HABITAT KEY



Fruit containing spores

## 5.5 Fleshy groundsel, Yellow-tops

*Othonna gregorii*

### HABITAT:

Usually occurs in the deep sands of dunefields and sand plains.

### DESCRIPTION:

Erect, blue-green, annual forb, 10-30cm high.

**Leaves** are fleshy, broad and elongated.

**Flowers** are bright yellow with 8-12 petals.

**Seeds** have large tufts of silky hairs and often cover the adjacent vegetation and soil with a silky white blanket.

**Flowering period** is late winter to early spring.

### NOTES:

Abundant in years of favourable autumn to winter rainfall.

Grows rapidly, but dies soon after flowering.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



Fleshy groundsel, Yellow-tops, *Othonna gregorii*

HABITAT KEY




Flowers and leaves

## 5.6 Poached-egg daisy

*Myriocephalus stuartii*

### HABITAT:

Occurs only in associations with the deep sands of dunefields and sandplains.

### DESCRIPTION:

Erect annual forb 10-50cm high, usually with hairy, sticky stems branching from the base.

**Leaves** are light green, woolly and elongated.

**Flowers** are white with a large yellow centre. Borne on long stalks.

**Flowering period** is generally spring, but is also opportunistic, depending on rains.

### NOTES:

The most abundant annual forbs in the Cooper Basin, covering vast areas of sandplain and dunefield, particularly in years when good autumn rainfall follows a dry summer.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



Poached-egg daisy, *Myriocephalus stuartii*

HABITAT KEY




Flower



Seed

## 5.7 Long-tails, Pussy-tails *Ptilotus polystachyus*

### HABITAT:

Usually occurs on red earths or brown soils, in well drained situations, often on dunes and sandplains.

### DESCRIPTION:

Perennial forb with simple or branched erect stems to 1m high.

**Leaves** are linear or lanceolate (lance-like) to about 10cm long, with wavy margins.

**Flowers** are yellowish-green, borne on long stalks at the ends of branches.

**Flowering** period is mainly spring.

### NOTES:

Although classed as a perennial, it more often behaves as an annual and dies off in summer.

Pussy-tails may be abundant in favourable conditions, developing into large sprawling plants.

A number of other species of *Ptilotus* also occur in the region, frequently on gibber plains.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



**Long-tails, Pussy-tails, *Ptilotus polystachyus***

Photograph courtesy of John Bushell  
(Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)

HABITAT KEY




Flower

## 5.8 Pea flower

*Swainsona campylantha*

### HABITAT:

Quite variable. Occurs on sandplains, floodplains, and gibber plains, often in depressions or drainage lines. Often quite common around Tirrawarra and Merrimelia.

### DESCRIPTION:

Trailing or erect perennial forb with stems to 60cm long.

**Leaves** consist of 3-7 well spaced leaflets ranging in shape from elliptical to linear to lanceolate (lance-shaped).

**Fruit** consist of a slender, cylindrical pod, 10-30mm long and 3-4mm wide.

**Flowering period** is usually spring, but sometimes winter and autumn.

### NOTES:

A short-lived species living probably no more than 2-3 years.

This species is rarely dominant, although can be moderately common amongst other annuals after favourable rains.

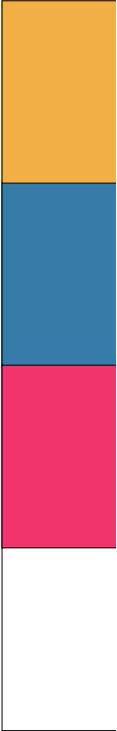
### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



Pea flower, *Swainsona campylantha*

HABITAT KEY



Flower and leaves

## 5.9 Variable groundsel

*Senecio lautus*

### HABITAT:

Occurs predominantly on dunes with free draining soils. It is often associated with a relatively intact overstory. It mainly occurs as scattered plants, but if soil conditions are favourable may occur as dense clumps.

### DESCRIPTION:

An annual or sometimes perennial herb around knee high, with an attractive yellow daisy-like flowers. Growth habit is very erect with very few branches.

**Leaves** are linear and narrow with the edges sometimes smooth, more often toothed or indented.

**Flowers** are large and bright yellow with 8-14 petals on each flower. The centres are a darker yellow than the petals. The flower heads are at the end of the branches.

**Fruit** are brown to deep brown, and are oblong. The seeds are crowned with white bristle like hairs.

**Flowering period** is late winter to spring.

### NOTES:

The plant flowers profusely creating a spectacular visual display. It is not very palatable to stock and has been reported to cause cattle poisoning.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



Variable groundsel, *Senecio lautus*

HABITAT KEY




Flower

## 5.10 Cat-head

*Tribulus terrestris*

### HABITAT:

Occupies a wide range of habitats, although is most commonly found on sandy soils. It is often associated with human activity such as degraded pasture or mechanical disturbance to the ground surface. It is often found on otherwise bare dunes around the Cooper Basin.

### DESCRIPTION:

Low, branched annual or perennial forb, spreading for up to 2m and often forming mats.

**Leaves** are composed of 4-8 pairs of elliptical leaflets 5-12mm long, the upper surface dark green, the lower surface paler.

**Flowers** are bright yellow to about 12mm diameter, with 5 petals.

**Fruit** are a star-like 'burr', 6-10mm long.

**Flowering period** is mainly summer to autumn.

### NOTES:

Often regarded as a troublesome weed. Under favourable conditions it spreads profusely and seeds rapidly. Plants are capable of flowering when they are only 3 weeks old, and may produce up to 200 prickly burrs per plant.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



**Cat-head, *Tribulus terrestris***

Photograph courtesy of Jenny Milson  
(Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)

HABITAT KEY




Fruit

## 5.11 Cattle bush

*Trichodesma zeylanicum*

### HABITAT:

Quite variable. Found on sandy or stony soils, or in areas subject to intermittent flooding. Usually found in areas that receive runoff.

### DESCRIPTION:

Erect perennial herb about 1m high, with a dense covering of stiff hairs.

**Leaves** are either narrow and elongated or broad lanceolate (lance-shaped).

**Flowers** are pale blue and occur in drooping clusters at the ends of branches. Flowers are tubular with five broad lobes.

**Flowering period** is most of the year, although is most profuse in spring.

### NOTES:

A fast-growing, short-lived species. Seldom abundant, Cattle bush usually occurs as scattered plants or in small colonies.

Used by Aboriginals as a decoction applied to sores.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

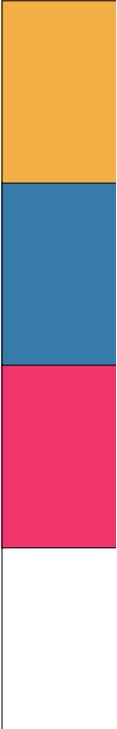
**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).



**Cattle bush**, *Trichodesma zeylanicum*

Photo courtesy of Jenny Milson  
(Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)

HABITAT KEY



Flower

## 5.12 Lobed spinifex

*Triodia basedowii*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on dune flanks and on sandy interdune flats.

### DESCRIPTION:

Perennial grass, forming compact or irregular shaped tussocks to 40cm high and 75cm wide. Older plants often form rings or crescents with open centres, usually 1-2m wide.

**Leaves** are sharply pointed, needle-like and can be erect or spreading.

**Flowers** are borne on a head well above the leaves at maturity, purple when younger, becoming yellow later.

**Flowering period** is throughout the year.

### NOTES:

A long-lived grass that is important in maintaining dune stability. It also provides an important habitat for small animals.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

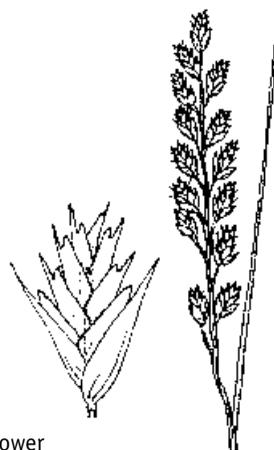
It appears to regenerate reasonably readily in situations where vegetation clearance has occurred. In such situations it is difficult to determine whether regeneration has been from root-stock or seed.

**Priority 2-3:** (ie. moderate to high conservation priority).



Lobed spinifex, *Triodia basedowii*

HABITAT KEY

Flower

## 5.13 Sandhill canegrass

*Zygochloa paradoxa*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on the flanks and crests of sand dunes. One of the most common small shrubs inhabiting the dunes of the Cooper Basin.

### DESCRIPTION:

Shrubby grass, 75-150cm high, forming dense, many stemmed tussocks or tangled clumps.

Stems are rigid, cane-like, cylindrical or sometimes angular.

**Leaves** are sparse, narrow and sometimes long, and can be stiff or loosely folded.

**Flowers** consist of relatively inconspicuous globular heads. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants.

**Flowering period** is winter to spring.

### NOTES:

An extremely drought resistant species which is an excellent sand stabiliser. It has been found that Sandhill canegrass with a ground cover of 5-18% was sufficient to stabilise a dune crest over a 25 year observation period. Responds rapidly to favourable rains and clumps expand from underground shoots.

One of the most important components of dunefield vegetation.

Once the plant has matured and seeded, the stems and leaves often die, but remains intact for many years, thereby assisting soil stability on dune crests.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

**Priority 4:** (ie. low conservation priority).

Sandhill canegrass will regrow from the root-stock of plants that appear to be dead.



Sandhill canegrass, *Zygochloa paradoxa*

HABITAT KEY




Flower

## 6.1 Onion weed

*Asphodelus fistulosus*

### HABITAT:

Occurs mainly on sandy soils, but also capable of colonizing other soil types. Normally associated with disturbed areas.

### DESCRIPTION:

An erect herb to 75cm that can be either an annual or perennial.

**Leaves** are cylindrical, tapering to the tip. They emit a pungent onion-like odour when crushed. The leaves grow from a central base.

**Flowers** have six, white to pink petals that have a distinctive red-brown stripe along the centre of each.

**Fruit** are globular and are divided into three segments.

**Flowering period** is spring and summer.

### NOTES:

A highly aggressive coloniser that can quickly become dominant in disturbed areas. It has trouble establishing if competing for moisture with perennial species. If this species is found, notify the environment group immediately.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Should be cleared and controlled.



HABITAT KEY


**Onion weed, *Asphodelus fistulosus***

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)



Flower

Fruit

## 6.2 Rubber vine

*Cryptostegia grandiflora*

### HABITAT:

Often occurs around dams, bores and bore drains.

### DESCRIPTION:

An aggressive, woody, climbing shrub that can grow over trees up to 15 metres high. Exudes a milky sap when broken or cut.

**Leaves** are dark green and glossy, and occur in opposite pairs.

**Flowers** are funnel shaped, and white internally and lilac to pink externally. The flower is divided into five distinctly pointed lobes.

**Fruit** consist of 10-12cm long, green pods occurring in pairs on a single stem. Each pod contains up to 450 seeds, each of which has a tuft of white silky hairs.

**Flowering period** is summer.

### NOTES:

A declared plant. This species is a native of Madagascar. When cut the plant produces a white sap (similar to rubber). If this species is found notify the environment group immediately.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Should be cleared and controlled.



**Rubber Vine, *Cryptostegia grandiflora***

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)

HABITAT KEY



## 6.3 Bellyache bush

*Jatropha gossypifolia*

### HABITAT:

A weed usually occurring in highly degraded areas such as old mine sites and quarries.

### DESCRIPTION:

A squat, thick stemmed shrub to 3 metres, with either a single or several main stems.

**Leaves** are deeply lobed (forming three sections), bright purple and sticky when young, and glossy green when mature. Mature leaves may have up to five lobes.

**Flowers** are purple with yellow centres, have five petals, and occur in clusters on the upper part of the plant.

**Fruit** consist of a smooth, oval shaped seed pod with several lobes. They are initially green and become brown when mature.

**Flowering period** is throughout the year.

### NOTES:

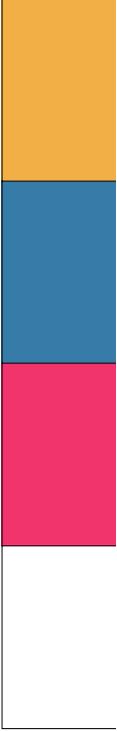
The seeds of the plant are reported to ease stomach aches when ingested. Contrary reports suggest that they are toxic to humans. If this species is found notify the environment group immediately.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Should be cleared and controlled.



HABITAT KEY



**Bellyache bush, *Jatropha gossypifolia***

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)



Flower and leaves



Seed-pod

## 6.4 Parkinsonia

*Parkinsonia aculeata*

### HABITAT:

Occurs on sandplains, particularly around stock watering points.

### DESCRIPTION:

A large shrub or small tree from 2-10 metres high, with zig-zag branches and very thorny stems.

**Leaves** consist of numerous small, oblong leaflets along each edge of the leaf branch, which is 20-40 cm long.

**Flowers** are yellow, fragrant, have five petals and occur on a slender drooping stalk. They have an orange centre.

**Fruit** consists of long pencil-like seedpods 5-10cm long. Seeds are oval, hard, and about 15 mm long.

**Flowering period** is summer to early autumn.

### NOTES:

A declared plant. A very aggressive weed, able to colonise areas where little else will grow. It is readily spread by stock. If this species is found notify the environment group immediately.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Should be cleared and controlled.



HABITAT KEY


**Parkinsonia**, *Parkinsonia aculeata*

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)



Seed-pods and leaves

## 6.5 Parthenium weed *Parthenium hysterophorus*

### HABITAT:

A common weed of highly disturbed sites such as road sides and stockyards. It generally occurs on heavy soils such as loams and clays.

### DESCRIPTION:

An erect annual herb up to two metres high, with a deep taproot and highly aromatic leaves when crushed.

**Leaves** are pale green and fern-like. Leaves occur alternately along the stem and are covered by fine soft hairs.

**Flowers** are small and creamy white, and occur on the tips of numerous stems.

**Fruit** are small, black, wedge shaped and relatively indistinct.

**Flowering period** is spring to summer.

### NOTES:

A declared plant. Prolonged exposure to the plant can cause rashes, asthma, and other health problems.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

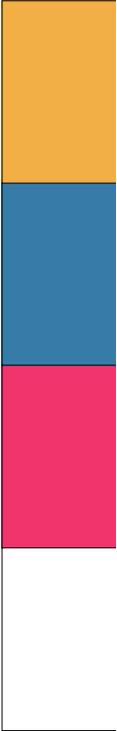
Should be cleared and controlled.



**Parthenium weed, *Parthenium hysterophorus***

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)

HABITAT KEY



## 6.6 Water lettuce

*Pistia stratiotes*

### HABITAT:

Occurs as dense floating mats in lakes, streams and waterholes. It is widely used as an aquarium plant.

### DESCRIPTION:

A free floating rosette shaped aquatic plant.

**Leaves** are pale green to light yellow. They are fan shaped with a least 6 prominent veins. Small white hairs densely cover each leaf.

**Flowers** are inconspicuous and white, and occur at the base of the leaves.

**Fruit** are small and berry-like. They have a tear like opening from which seeds are released.

**Flowering period** is all year round.

### NOTES:

A declared plant. A popular aquarium plant that quickly invades waterways, excluding light and impeding flow. The plant is easily propagated from seed or vegetative matter, and consequently spreads rapidly. If this species is found notify the environment group immediately.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Should be cleared and controlled.



**Water lettuce, *Pistia stratiotes***

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)

HABITAT KEY



Flower

## 6.7 Mesquite

*Prosopis sp.*

### HABITAT:

Occurs primarily along watercourses or in drainage depressions.

### DESCRIPTION:

A large, deciduous shrub or small tree to 12 metres, with either many stems or a single stem and a spreading canopy. Twigs have a zig-zag shape.

Bark is rough and brown to grey/black, with small branches being smooth and dark red or green.

**Leaves** are fern-like, dark green and consist of a series of smaller leaflets, with 6-18 opposite pairs. A pair of spines is present at the base of each leaf.

**Flowers** are greenish-yellow and are borne on 10 cm long flowering spikes. The flowers have five lobes and are fragrant.

**Fruit** consists of a 10-20 cm long seed pod containing 5-20 seeds. The seed pod is slightly constricted between seeds.

**Flowering period** is summer.

### NOTES:

A declared plant. Leaves are generally shed in late autumn and early winter each year, although under some conditions the plant may not lose its leaves and simply become dormant over winter. If this species is found notify the environment group immediately.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Should be cleared and controlled.



HABITAT KEY


**Mesquite, *Prosopis sp.***

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)



Flowers and leaves



Seed-pod

## 6.8 Ruby dock

*Rumex vesicaria*

### HABITAT:

Occurs mainly in dunefields.

### DESCRIPTION:

A large annual herb from 0.2-1 metre in height, with a distinctive seed head. Stems are fleshy like that of a succulent.

**Leaves** are large, grey-green, and triangular shaped with a distinctive tip.

**Flowers** are borne on flower spikes that grow from the base of the plant. They occur in smaller clusters of 2 to 3 and are pinkish to purple.

**Fruit** are brown to black, and are very distinctive on the flowering stem. They are round and have four distinct valve openings.

**Flowering period** is spring.

### NOTES:

A relatively common and widely dispersed weed in northern South Australia and south west Queensland. Is an extremely aggressive colonizer and must be reported to the environment department immediately if detected.

### CONSERVATION PRIORITY:

Should be cleared and controlled.



**Ruby dock** *Rumex vesicaria*

Photograph courtesy of Colin Wilson  
(Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission)

HABITAT KEY


## 6.9 Additional Weeds

### Coral cactus

*Opuntia cylindrica*

#### HABITAT:

An extremely hardy plant, capable of growing on most soil types and under harsh conditions.

#### DESCRIPTION:

A large, umbrella shaped shrub or small tree, often with multiple trunks, to around 9 metres high. It has a rounded, dense canopy, and fern-like leaves.

**Leaves** are dark green, and modified to pads. When mature these pads widen and become distorted to a coral-like shape.

**Flowers** are small and red, and grow out of the leaf pads.

**Fruit** are indistinct.

**Flowering period** is any time of the year.

### Rope cactus

*Opuntia imbricata*

#### HABITAT:

An extremely hardy plant, capable of growing on most soil types and under harsh conditions.

#### DESCRIPTION:

A medium to large shrub up to 3.5 metres, with an open branching growth habit.

**Leaves** are modified to large, dull, grey-green pads that are covered in yellow and white spines. Each pad has a series of enlarged ridges that resemble intertwined rope.

**Flowers** are borne at the end of each pad and are red to purple.

**Fruit** are small and yellow, and resemble a small custard apple.

**Flowering period** is throughout the year.

## Prickly acacia

*Acacia nilotica*

### HABITAT:

Occurs mainly around bores, particularly in hummock grassland.

### DESCRIPTION:

A large , umbrella shaped shrub or small tree, often with multiple trunks, to around 9 metres high. It has a rounded, dense canopy, and fern-like leaves.

**Leaves** are fern-like, and consist of a series of leaflets, in 10-20 opposite pairs. A pair of spines is present at the base of young leaves, but disappears with age.

**Flowers** consist of bright yellow globules on a flowering spike with up to six in a cluster.

**Fruit** consist of 10-15 cm long, flat seedpods, which are hairy and grey-green. The pod is constricted between seeds.

**Flowering period** is autumn and winter.

### NOTES:

A declared plant.

## 7. Plant Conservation Priorities

Plant	Perennial	Years to maturity	Regenerates readily from seed	Regenerates readily from root-stock	Conservation* priority
<b>Trees</b>					
Beefwood	X	30-50			1
Bloodwood	X	30-50	X		1
Broughton willow	X	30-50	X	X	2
Bull oak	X	30-50			1
Coolibah	X	50-100	X		1
Emu apple	X	30-50	X		2
Gidgee	X	30-50			2
Mulga	X	30-50			2
Native apricot	X	30-50			1
Plum bush	X	30-50	X		2
(parasitic on roots)					
Queensland bean tree	X	50-100			1
Red mulga	X	30-50			2
River cooba	X	30-50	X		2
River paperbark	X	30-50	X	X	1
River red gum	X	50-100	X		1
Straggly corkbark	X	30-50			1
Whitewood	X	30-50	X		2
Wild orange	X	30-50			1
Yapunyah	X	30-50			2
<b>Shrubs</b>					
Bladder saltbush	X	5-10	X		3
Bluebush pea	X	3-5	X		4
Bristly sea-heath	X	10-30			3
Buckbush	X	1-3			4
Dead finish	X	10-20	X		2
Desert fuchsia	X	20-30			2
Emu bush	X	20-30	X	X	3
Eurah	X	10-20			3
Fern leaf grevillea	X	20-30			1
Flowering lignum	X	20-30			1
Golden goosefoot	X	5-10			3
Honey suckle spider-flower	X	5-10			3
Hop bush	X	10-15	X		3

Plant	Perennial	Years to maturity	Regenerates readily from seed	Regenerates readily from root-stock	Conservation priority*
Lignum	X	20-30		X	2
Marpoo	X	10-15	X		3
Mimosa bush	X	10-20	X		2
Murray's wattle	X	20-30			2
Native currant	X	10-30			2
Needlewood	X	20-50	X		2
Nitre bush	X	5-10			3
Old man saltbush	X	30-50		very poor	2
Prickly wattle	X	10-15	X		3
Ruby saltbush	X	5-10			3
Samphire	X	20-30			3
Sandhill spider-flower	X	20-30			2
Silver cassia	X	5-10			3
Spiny saltbush	X	5-10			3
Spotted emu bush	X	20-30			2
Tangled lechenaultia	X	2-5			2
<b>Herbs</b>					
Barley Mitchell grass	X	1-3			4
Cat-head		<1	X		4
Cattle bush	X	1-3			4
Fleshy groundsel		<1	X		4
Lobed spinifex	X	10-20	X		2-3
Long-tails	X	1-2			4
Mulga grass	X	1-3			4
Nardoo		<1		X	4
Pea flower	X	1-3	X		4
Poached egg daisies		<1	X		4
Sandhill cane grass	X	5-10	X		4
Swamp canegrass	X	5-10	X		4
Variable groundsel	X	5-10			4
* 1 = very high conservation priority; 2 = high conservation priority; 3 = moderate conservation priority; 4 = low conservation priority (note: weed species should be cleared and controlled – contact the Santos Environment Group for advice on weed control)					

## 8. Rare, Vulnerable and Endangered Plants Occurring in the Cooper Basin

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS		
		SA <sup>1</sup>	QLD <sup>2</sup>	COMM. <sup>3</sup>
Waddy wood	<i>Acacia peuce</i>		V	V
Pickard's wattle	<i>Acacia pickardii</i>			V
Slender wattle	<i>Acacia tenuissima</i>	R		
Gibber saltbush	<i>Atriplex fissivalvis</i>	R	R	
	<i>Atriplex lobativalvis</i>	R	R	
	<i>Atriplex morrisii</i>	R	R	
	<i>Bergia occulpetala</i>	V		
Wooly-seed daisy	<i>Brachycome eriogona</i>	R	R	
Black-seed daisy	<i>Brachycome melanocarpa</i>	V		
	<i>Bulbostylis turbinata</i>	R		
Pale beauty heads	<i>Calocephalus sonderi</i>	R		R
Downs nut-grass	<i>Cyperus bifax</i>	R		
	<i>Cyperus dactylotes</i>	V		
Climbing caustic	<i>Euphorbia sarcostemmoides</i>	R		
Sea-heath	<i>Frankenia cupularis</i>	R		
Sea-heath	<i>Frankenia plicata</i>	R		E
Western tar-vine	<i>Gilesia biniflora</i>	R		
Flame spider-flower	<i>Grevillea kennedyana</i>		V	V
	<i>Indigofera oxyrachis</i>	R	V	
Small monkey-flower	<i>Mimulus prostratus</i>	R		
Wavy marshwort	<i>Nymphoides crenata</i>	R		

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS		
		SA <sup>1</sup>	QLD <sup>2</sup>	COMM. <sup>3</sup>
Large adders tongue	<i>Ophioglossum polyphyllum</i>	R		
Five-wing bonefruit	<i>Osteocarpum pentapterum</i>	E		
Sandhill riceflower	<i>Pimelea penicillaris</i>	R		
	<i>Ptilotus maconochiei</i>	R	R	
	<i>Ptilotus pseudohelipteroides</i>	R	R	
	<i>Rulingia salviifolia</i>	R	R	
Black's copperburr	<i>Sclerolaena blackiana</i>	R	R	
Holt's bindyi	<i>Sclerolaena holtiana</i>	R		
Trigger plant	<i>Stylidium desertorum</i>	V		
	<i>Swainsona oligophylla</i>	R		
	<i>Xerothamnella parvifolia</i>		V	V
Small-fruit twinleaf	<i>Zygophyllum humillimum</i>	R		

V = Vulnerable

E = Endangered

R = Rare

1. National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1982

2. Nature Conservation Act, 1992

3. Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999

**It is an offence to clear these plants.**

## 9. Index of plants by common name

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## Notes

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