

COMMON NAME

BELAH

SCIENTIFIC NAME *Casuarina cristata*

FAMILY CASUARINACEAE

CATEGORY NATIVE TREE

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

- Tree growing 10–20 m high with fine foliage and rough grey bark
- Leaves reduced to tiny pointed scales or 'leaf teeth' sheathing the slender branchlets
- Foliage branchlets dark green, 0.6–0.9 mm in diameter, with whorls of 9–16 'leaf teeth'
- Fruits are woody cones 15–30 mm long, with protruding valves which open to release pale winged seed
- Seed cones only occur on female trees; male trees release pollen from rust-coloured spikes at branchlet tips

WHERE IT GROWS & WHY:

- Occurs in woodlands and open forests; often on flatter country and in depressions where it can form dense stands
- Frequently found on heavy or clayey soils with calcareous nodules near the surface
- Tolerant of alkaline and saline soils

MANAGEMENT/SIGNIFICANCE:

- Fast-growing and long-lived; improves soil by 'fixing' nitrogen
- Excellent for shade, shelter and erosion control; may sucker freely from exposed roots
- Foliage is eaten readily by stock so fencing may be required to protect trees
- Valuable wildlife habitat; seed is a preferred food of the threatened Glossy Black-cockatoo
- Wood is hard and durable; used for fencing, turning and firewood

SIMILAR PLANTS:

- Black Oak (*C. pauper*) is very closely related but smaller and of poorer form, with smaller seed cones; it is generally found on lighter textured red-brown soils
- Bulloak (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*) has coarser, tougher foliage, smaller, flatter seed cones and prefers non-calcareous soils



Tree habit, seed cones, foliage:
L McMahon

