



## Karri Botanical Notes

Karri (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*) is a true "gum" tree, having a smooth bark, the outer layer of which sheds annually in rather large thick plates. It received the name "diversicolor" because of the varying colour of the bark at the time of the year when the older bark is shed. At this time the new bark, orange-yellow in colour, contrasts strongly with the newly exposed bark, while underneath the shedding plates the bark is greyish-white. Karri bark is thick, rich in tannin and yellow in fracture.

Karri occurs in the higher rainfall regions of the south-west of Western Australia either in pure formation, or mixed with marri, or more rarely with jarrah or the tingles. The major karri area is bounded by Nannup and the upper waters of the Donnelly River in the north and extends south-eastwards to Denmark. Isolated patches, however, occur further east and west of the main belt near the Porongorup Range and Hamelin Bay respectively. The prime forest covers an area of approximately 500,000 acres, most of which has been dedicated as State Forest.

The timber, which varies from

pale pink to deep red, is hard heavy, stiff and tough, and considerably stronger than Douglas fir (oregon) and English oak. It is an exceptionally good bending timber.

It responds well to kiln drying and suitable drying schedules are available.

Rated as durability Class 3 by the Division of Forest Products, C.S.I.R.O. it finds ready use for practically all building and construction purposes, if suitable provision is made for protection from termites (where they constitute a hazard) and if adequate ventilation is maintained.

It is used in building construction throughout the state and houses built entirely of this timber have been in existence for over 50 years in the lower south-west.

### Distinction between karri and jarrah timber

Jarrah and karri timbers are very similar in appearance. A common distinguishing test is to burn a splinter of the wood and note the result. Jarrah burns to a black charcoal, but with karri the red-hot coal continues to glow until a true white ash is produced. It should be noted that this test should be applied only to sound heartwood, as jarrah hardwood which has been exposed to weathering conditions and jarrah

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sapwood may both give a white ash. However, jarrah always shows a black char beneath the white ash, while karri gives a white ash only.

The Forests Department maintains a timber inspection service for the benefit of buyers who wish to have timber certified true to name and up to specification. To inspectors, experienced in handling these species, the timbers are quite distinct, and the possibility of error remote.

The leaves of karri are alternate and petiolate (having a leaf stalk), broadly lance shaped, dark green above and paler underneath, and more spreading than pendulous—an unusual character in south-western Australian trees.

The cotyledons (seed leaves) after germination are broadly kidney shaped and taper into short stalks. The foliage of the young leaves is broad and delicate, and persists on the young trees until they are many feet in height. The leaf has a network pattern of fine veins as compared with the distinct parallel venation of the larger leaved marri (which is a typical bloodwood).

Flowers are a creamy white. The fruit is pear-shaped (pyriform) and contracted at the summit, slightly more than half an inch in diameter, with a narrow rim. The capsule is deeply enclosed within the fruiting calyx and the valves are also included.

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