

MINOR SPECIES - AND PROBLEM SITES

by A.L. Clifton

There are several valuable trees growing in our forests which deserve more attention. For instance:

She-oak	Casuarina Fraseriana
River Banksia	Banksia verticillata
Warren River Cedar and possibly	Agonis juniperiana
Bullich	Eucalyptus megacarpa

The value of sheoak is two-fold.

It is decorative and is dimensionally stable when dry. Hence its use for barrel staves, and decorative panelling and in furniture. Its uses could be expanded considerably.

River Banksia is a particularly beautiful wood and is scarce and costly.

Warren River Cedar is a light, strong, and particularly valuable for boat building.

Bullich is said to be ideal for turnery.

All these species reach their best development on what are considered inferior sites - and usually regarded as problem areas. They are given treatment, which can only be described as destructive. "Burn it as hot as possible" is the usual attitude to such sites.

While it must be conceded Sheoak grows well in prime jarrah forest, it also does well on poor, dry sand country where jarrah production is low. Sheoak is rather susceptible to damage from hot fires, and present treatment is causing losses of valuable wood every year. There is a case for reserving this country for Sheoak production, and a reason for careful prescribed burning or even full protection, if necessary. There are many such areas in the south.

River Banksia:

This tree grows well along the valleys of well defined watercourses in the jarrah forest. There must be hundreds of miles of such sites a chain or two wide, capable of producing a crop of this splendid tree. Well established River Banksia will suppress the scrub growth greatly feared in but largely fostered by current controlled burning attitudes. It is a pity that even light burning will kill River Banksia. The present state of development of northern divisions could possibly permit protection of some of these gullies and thereby increase their productivity.

Warren River Cedar:

Occupies swampy sites - often associated with River Banksia along the edges of streams in the karri forest. Also there are considerable areas of flat

swamp country in the south which is capable of carrying healthy stands of Warren Cedar. Again, these sites are all burned very thoroughly as they are regarded as fire hazards.

Bullich:

The natural habitat of this species constitutes the wet, sandy spillways - aquifers - at the heads of permanent streams in jarrah forest region, and practically any wet sandy site in the Karri forest, where the water is on the move, not stagnant.

This species has also been noted on siliceous-ironstone country in the Donnybrook Sunkland, suggesting that, like flooded gum, it will grow under a range of conditions, but can compete best under those conditions mentioned before.

One could go into minute detail defining the small differences of natural environment for the last three species, but this will not be needed until a full silvicultural study is embarked upon.

What then should be done?

Firstly, the four species mentioned, should receive a careful study so as to define natural environment, propagation, growth rate etc. Wood properties should be more clearly outlined, particularly in the last three species. Large-scale trials should be laid down to establish suitable silvicultural methods for commercial timber production from each species.

With the current value of River Banksia high as it is in the veneer trade, this species should prove the most worthwhile for investigation, and the place to start is on those wet sites, problem areas within *P. radiata* plantations.
