

MARRI FLORISTICS

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We have all heard the saying "The marri is blooming early, it will be a heavy winter". How many have enquired what is early for marri bloom? To try to obtain the answer and also the frequency of blooming and the time taken from floral bud initiation to capsule maturity, a range of marri trees were studied in the Manjimup-Pemberton Divisions. Twenty-four trees of various sizes were selected in February 1976 when flowering was commencing.

Observations made in 1969 and 1970, showed a flowering time of February-March with the 1970 flowering being the result of buds initiated during the leaf flush, i.e. December-January of that season. The trees studied in 1976 bloomed through February and had finished flowering by the fourth week in March. In mid January 1977 many of the trees were again showing floral buds and by mid-February flowering was again commencing. At this stage, when flowering commenced, most of the previous year's capsule crop was mature enough to contain viable seed. Trees which have not initiated floral buds in 1977 either have a very heavy crop of capsules from 1976 flowering or two crops of capsules from the 1976 flowering and some previous flowering.

From 1936 to 1940 records were kept of the flowering of different tree species suitable for honey production, copies of blossoming times for the Manjimup district show that marri bloomed at the following times during this period.

September 1936 to May 1937
May 1938 to November 1938
February 1939 to May 1939
February 1940 to June 1940

With the exception of the 1938 flowering this shows a general pattern of summer flowering. It is not known whether old records of flowering were general flowering, or whether single odd trees were sufficient to comment upon.

From indications at this stage, it appears that marri in the Southern areas, i.e. Manjimup-Pemberton districts, initiates floral buds in December-January, flowers in February-March and mature seed is available in the capsules 12-15 months later. Flowering periodicity appears to be possibly controlled by vigour of the tree which in the forest situation is largely dependent on the quantity of capsules in the crown. Trees with a light capsule crop appear capable of blooming at a 12 monthly period but those with heavy crops or a combination of two lighter crops do not appear to have either a vigorous leaf flush or floral bud initiation. This may explain why, in certain years, a large percentage of the marri blooms, and in other years there are comparatively small numbers blooming. Open-grown trees seem to flower much more frequently and this is possibly because they are not under so much stress for either nutrient or water and can sustain both capsule development and growth simultaneously.