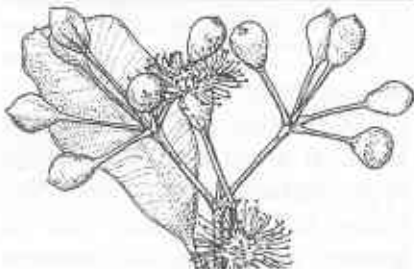


Will 1997 be a good Marri year?

You sometimes hear people say that if the marri flowers well, it means that a good, wet winter will follow. Can trees foretell the future? - unlikely! But stands of marri, and even individual trees, do show great variation in flowering. What is the likely reason?

Like most gum trees, marri takes several years to produce mature fruits. So, in the winter and spring of 1996, marri grew new shoots and leaves, with buds last of all, appearing in early summer. They grow rapidly, starting to open in January, and going on until March (this will be 1997). The fruits take a year to mature (so this is now summer 1997/8), then they open and the seed is gradually shed, though the empty fruits remain hanging on the tree. The fruits and seeds, being large, are a big drain on the tree's resources.

IN BRIEF



If the tree has flowered heavily, it will put most of the next year's effort into making fruits, rather than new buds. This effect will be even more noticeable if it is a poor season.

So, to answer the question, "Will the marri flower well this year?" we need to look back. Did that tree flower well *last year* - if so, it will have put more effort into fruits than into buds, so this year will be a poor flowering.

Fortunately for our native fauna, which depend on marri flowers to get them through the "autumn feed gap", the trees are very individual in their responses, and each year there will always be about 20% that are flowering and fruiting well.

Penny Hussey

When is a gum tree not a eucalypt?

- when it's a *Corymbia*!

The group of gum trees known as Bloodwoods has recently had a scientific name change, they have been taken out of the genus *Eucalyptus* and put in a new genus, *Corymbia*. Thus marri is now officially *Corymbia calophylla*, and red-flowering gum is *Corymbia ficifolia*. Its probable, however, that most plant nurseries and field workers will still be calling them eucalypts!

For more information, read *Australian Plants*, Sept 1996. This is the journal of the Society for Growing Australian Plants - the Wildflower Society of Western Australia is the local branch.

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