

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TREES.

## No. 6.—THE SALMON GUM.

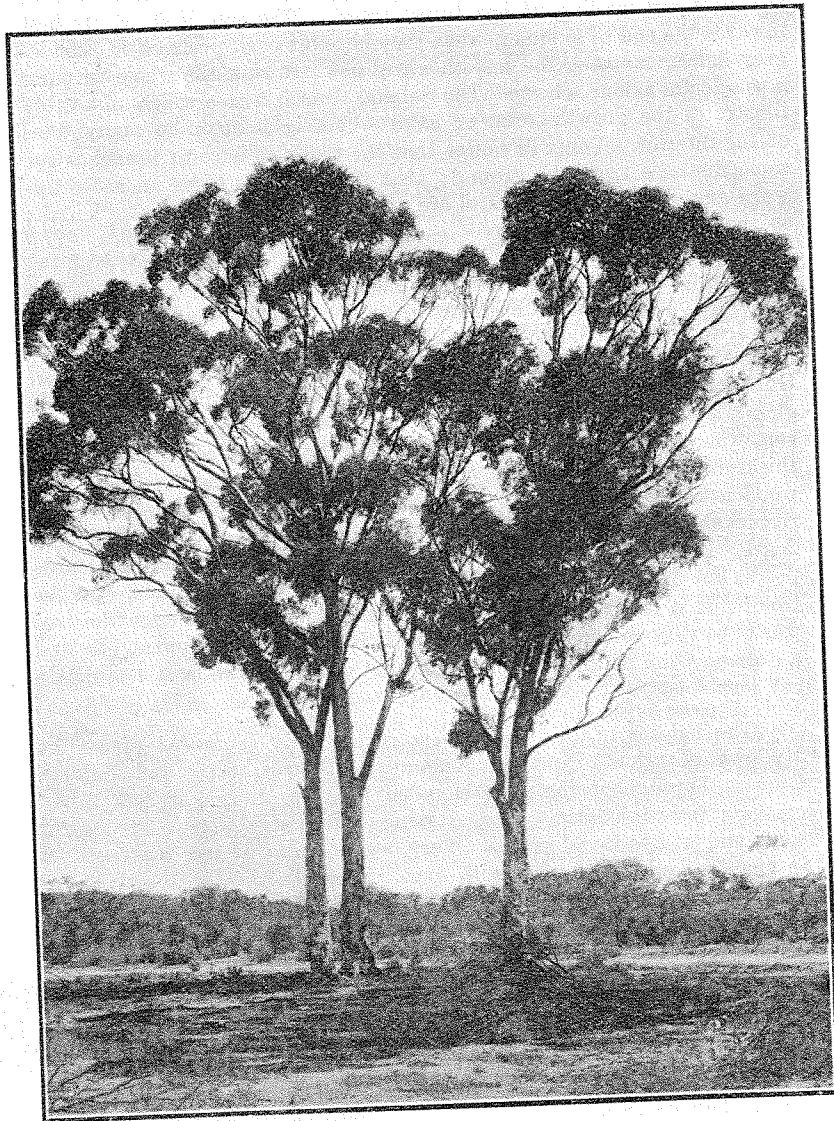
(C. A. GARDNER, Government Botanist.)

The Salmon Gum is one of the most widely distributed of Eucalyptus trees in Western Australia. Its clean outline, warm grey or orange-tinted trunk and deep green glossy leaves make it one of the most outstanding of our forest trees. The tree looks at its best towards the end of summer, when the old outer bark peels off in purple-grey flakes, exposing the smooth warm new exterior, the whole forming a wonderful colour scheme. The Salmon Gum is a tree which admirably illustrates the growth-form, or habit which is common to many trees of the interior. You will notice that the trunk is bare of branches for some distance from the ground; that the branches form an acute upward angle with the trunk, and are more or less all of the same length; so that the crown of the tree is slightly domed, or almost flat. You will notice this feature in many other trees also, particularly in the trees growing in the wheat belt and the Goldfields. The York Gum has the same outline, but its branches arise closer to the base of the trunk. The leaves of the Salmon Gum are situated in a flat layer at the tips of the branches, and are small and pendulous (hanging). The Salmon Gum may always be distinguished from otherwise similar gums by its glossy leaves. The bark, if we examine a broken piece, is found to be somewhat spongy, and is salmon-pink or yellowish in colour. It is also thick, and usually comes away from the wood quite easily. The heart-wood is red when fresh, but dries to a reddish-brown with age. It is remarkably straight-grained and strong, and is also very heavy and dense. In the agricultural districts it is largely used for building purposes, but unfortunately it is liable to attack from white ants. On the Goldfields it is largely used for supports in mines. Although the tree was once very common at Kalgoorlie, it is now quite uncommon to find a Salmon Gum within forty miles of that centre; it has been completely cut out.

The habitat of this tree covers such widely separated places as Mullewa, Zanthus, Pingelly, Katanning, Ravensthorpe and Salmon Gums. Throughout the area bounded by these towns, it is a fairly common tree, inhabiting the red loamy soils characteristic of depressions and wide alluvial plains. Very occasionally the tree may be seen in granite country growing with Jam. When this occurs the trees are usually very fine specimens, for they are much taller than the latter tree, and thus are enabled to spread, developing wide and bushy crowns. The largest Salmon Gums occur in the southern portions of the area of distribution, especially towards the Oldfield River to the east of Ravensthorpe, where trees of eighty feet are not uncommon.

Coming to botanical matters you will find that the buds, flowers, and fruits of the Salmon Gum are very small and yellowish in colour. The peduncles (which are the stalks supporting the umbels) are only slightly flattened, if at all; and the pedicels or flower-stalks are slender, and as long as, or slightly longer than, the calyx-tube. The operculum is almost hemispherical, or slightly pointed, and about as long as the calyx-tube. The calyx-tube is hemispherical, so that the

whole bud is almost globular and much less than a quarter of an inch in length. The flowers are white, the stamens being sharply kinked in the bud-stage. Later on they expand, but often in the developed flower there remains some evidence of the sharp bend or inflection. The fruit is very small, and hemispherical or almost so, about an eighth of an inch in diameter. It is flat-topped with prominent needle-like valves, formed from the split base of the style.



Salmon Gums.

The Salmon Gum is closely related to the Morrels and to the Merrit. It may be confused with the Merrit but not with the Morrels, since

these trees have a rough bark. The Merrit, however, although it may closely resemble the Salmon Gum, has urn- or vase-shaped fruits, and the long pointed operculum is much swollen at the base, and broader than the summit of the calyx-tube. The leaves are also larger and a much deeper green, and the tree grows in somewhat lighter soil than is the case with the Salmon Gum.

In the Salmon Gum we possess one of the finest ornamental trees to be found amongst Eucalyptus trees. Its habit of growth makes it a most suitable tree for avenue planting; and if the trees are widely spaced and the ground not trampled underneath, it will develop into a most lovely tree. You must remember that this tree is a surface feeder; its roots do not develop to any extent vertically, but they run below the surface of the soil laterally for a considerable distance. Hence it is important not to allow the ground to become too hard. The trees should not be allowed to grow too close together, otherwise the spread of the crown will be diminished. The plate shows you three Salmon Gums growing in fairly open country. If you compare them with typical forest trees you will at once see that they have branched well below their average height, and that there is a considerable development of branches below the summit. Such trees are valuable from the shade-bearing point of view, and would be welcome on any holding. Every farmer who possesses Salmon Gums will do well to reserve some for shade purposes. If the trees have been growing close to each other, and have developed long trunks and a thin crown, they will never be of much value for shade; but if cut off about three feet above ground the trees will coppice ("sucker") well, and ultimately become bushy, shade-bearing trees which may in time become an ornament and an asset.

Next month I shall give you a diagram of the leaves, buds, and fruits of the Salmon Gum, and I shall also deal with the Gimlet.

#### Correction.

It has been noticed that an unfortunate error crept into the February number of "Our Rural Magazine." On page 21, the second paragraph of "Western Australian Wildflowers, No. 4," opened with the following:—"The order of plants to which the Hibiscus belongs, the *Cienfugosia*, etc." This should have read, "The genus of plants to which the Crimson-centred Hibiscus (*Cienfugosia*) belongs, was named after a Spanish botanist, etc."

#### WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWERS.

This series has unfortunately to be omitted from the March issue of "Our Rural Magazine" since no reserve articles have yet been arranged, and it has been impossible to obtain a satisfactory subject at this time of the year. It is hoped, however, to have material in hand for the April issue, after which the series will appear regularly.