

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TREES.

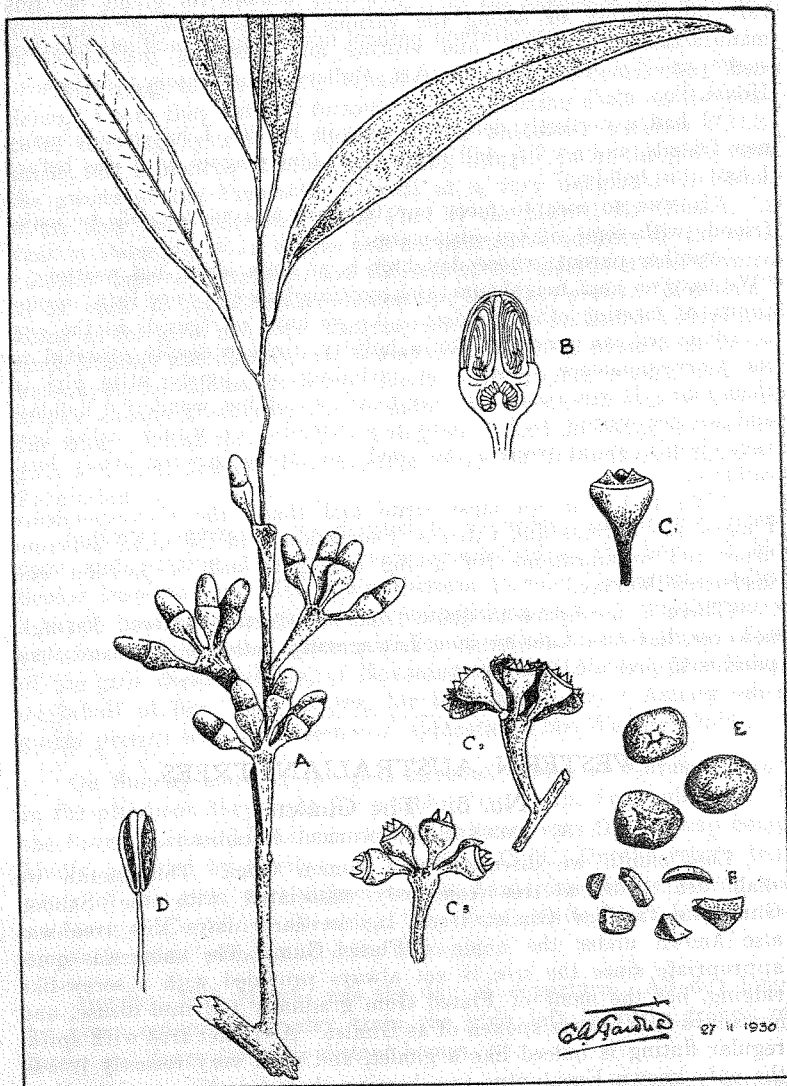
No. 8. The Gimlet.

(C. A. GARDNER, Government Botanist.)

Last month we discussed the Salmon Gum. This month we shall deal with a tree commonly associated with the Salmon Gum—the familiar Gimlet tree. In the early days this tree was also known under the name of Fluted Gum. The name was quite appropriate since the tree is not always provided with a screw-like ridging, but the name of Fluted Gum gradually fell into disuse, and nowadays it is always spoken of as Gimlet. A Gimlet tree with spiral regular fluting is indeed like a gimlet, and until very recently it was the only known Eucalyptus tree bearing these peculiar marks. Now, however, there are two other trees known to us which have a similar character, and both of them occur only on the Goldfields and southwards as far as Norseman and Salmon Gums. I will not deal further with them now, but they will appear in due course in "Our Kura Magazine."

The Gimlet tree is perhaps the most poorly foliated tree of all the Eucalyptus trees in Australia. The tall slender trunk is crowned by the merest skeleton of an umbrella-like crown, and the leaves are situated in apparently one layer at the summits of the twigs. I am speaking, of course, of the adult tree. Younger trees show a more

healthy development of the crown. The tree attains a height of 60-80 feet, but is frequently less (30-60 feet), and the diameter may be as much as 30 inches, but again it is usually much less. The trunk of the young tree is usually spirally fluted, or longitudinally fluted, or at least angular. Smooth cylindrical trunks are rarely met with in trees



Gimlet. (*Eucalyptus salubris*, F. v. M.)

(A.) Twig with buds and leaves. (B.) Bud (enlarged). (C.) Fruits. (D.) Anther (enlarged). (E.) Seeds (enlarged). (F.) Sterile seeds (enlarged).

under fifty years old. Old trunks, however, may be quite smooth and cylindrical. The bark of the Gimlet is thin and smooth, of a rich greenish-red in colour, or warming to a burnt-sienna tint. The inner bark is pale green. The heartwood is pale brown, hard and dense and remarkably tough, strong, and straight-grained

The range of the Gimlet tree extends eastwards from Cunderdin to beyond Zanthus on the Trans-Australian railway. It is found as far north as Mullewa, but the boundary of its habitat drops to the south of Lake Moore and Broad Arrow. To the south of the Eastern Railway it extends as far as Quairading, Kulin, Hatter's Hill (north of Ravensthorpe), and the Bremer Range. I do not know of it farther to the east in this latitude. It grows principally in alluvial flats in clay loamy soil, but is occasionally found also on stony rises in stony clay soil.

When reading the following description keep the illustration before you. This will make clear the meaning of the terms used.

The leaves of the Gimlet tree are somewhat small, and of a bright glossy green like those of the Salmon Gum. The midrib alone is prominent, with the intramarginal vein close to the edge. The peduncles are flattened, and are about half an inch long as a rule—although they may be much less—and scarcely flattened. The umbel consists of five to eight flowers on short stalks. The calyx-tube is almost hemispherical and tapers into the pedicel (flower-stalk). The operculum, usually of an egg, and is longer than the calyx-tube, and varies in colour from yellow to reddish-brown, usually shining. The stamens are kinked in the bud with white anthers which open in parallel slits. The fruits are ovoid to hemispherical, often slightly two-angled, with a convex summit and exerted delta-shaped valves. The fruits and the peduncle, however, vary considerably in shape and size, but the drawing reproduced will give you a fair idea of typical examples.

The Gimlet somewhat resembles the Swamp Mallet (*E. spathulata*), but has much broader leaves. It is most closely related to *Eucalyptus campaspe*—the "Silver-topped Gimlet" of the Coolgardie-Norseman district, and the Dipterous Gimlet (*E. diptera*) of the Salmon Gum district. I shall deal with these affinities when discussing these trees.

THE GARDEN.

Autumn Leaves.

What mean these banners spread,
These paths of royal red,
So gaily carpeted?
Comes there a prince to-day?

The above lines were written of the beauty of an English autumn, when the majority of the trees shed their leaves, which have by that time turned to brown splashed with crimson and golden yellow. With the advent of April come the glories of our Australian autumn. Our native trees, though evergreen, shed many leaves during this season, and don their dresses of green and gold. In the orchards and vineyards the leaves are falling, yet in the gardens and meadows there is

"The filmy veil of greenness
That thickens as we gaze."

The leaves are going to rest, as the young seedlings set out on their life-journeys.