

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TREES.

## No. 14: THE BLUE MALLET.

*(Eucalyptus Gardneri.)*

(By C. A. GARDNER, Government Botanist).

Last month we discussed the Brown Mallet, the bark of which has proved such a valuable article of commerce. The Brown Mallet is the most valuable of the three species of Mallets—the Brown Mallet, Blue Mallet, and White Mallet. The White Mallet is very scarce. Patches of more than one or two acres are rarely seen, although it is said that this tree was once common along the Great Southern Railway. The Blue Mallet on the contrary is quite as common as the Brown Mallet, and usually the two trees occur in association.

The curious thing about the Blue Mallet is that apart from the colour, and perhaps the thickness also, its bark very closely resembles that of the Brown Mallet, but the Blue Mallet is usually much inferior in its tannin content to Brown Ballet. The trees, however, are not



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Buds and Fruits.

closely related. They really belong to different series of the genus *Eucalyptus*, the Brown Mallet being related very closely to the Swamp Yate (which it does not superficially resemble), while the Blue Mallet is closely related to the Wandoo—again a very dissimilar tree. Thus it is that superficial characters, such as habit or external appearance, give but little indication of true relationship.

The range of the Blue Mallet extends from Cuballing southwards to Peringillup, some distance west of the Great Southern Railway; and

eastwards to Ravensthorpe and Mount Holland. Within this area the Blue Mallet generally occurs on gravelly hills or breakaway country; in any case it is found in soil containing some gravel. It is thus found as a rule with Brown Mallet, the two trees being very similar in appearance and stature, except that the Blue Mallet can be at once readily distinguished by its dull blue-grey cast of foliage.

The leaves of this tree vary in shape and size, but are usually between three and four inches in length, without any prominent veins. The peduncles are flattened, with an umbel of from 6 to 10 flowers on short, almost terete pedicels. The calyx-tube is narrow like that of the Wandoo, and the operculum similar in shape, but much longer and acuminate, with a long, often slightly hooked point. The fruit is shaped like an elongated pear or is almost cylindrical, but widening upwards, and nearly half an inch long. It is contracted at the orifice, and has included or flush valves.

The Blue Mallet yields from 22 to 30.1 per cent. tannin, as against the Brown Mallet's 40-57 per cent. The bark is widely used as an adulterate with Brown Mallet; but the two can be separated, even in the dried state, by a careful observer.