

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TREES.

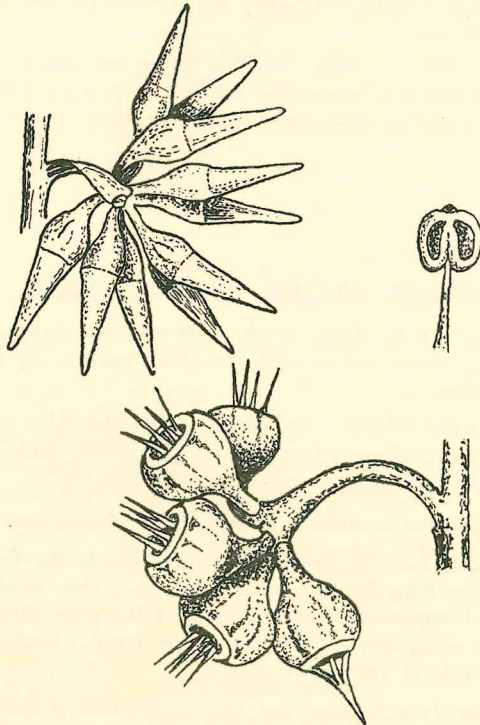
No. XV.: THE WHITE MALLET.

(Eucalyptus falcata, Maiden.)

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

This tree, once so common in the Great Southern areas, is now rarely met with. This is due to its being destroyed for the sake of its bark, and to some extent also to clearing the land for agricultural purposes. The largest patch I have seen consists of not more than fifty trees. This is not far from Wagin, and I doubt if such another patch occurs.

The White Mallet is a tree of from 20 to 35 feet. It is something like a Wandoo in appearance, but the bark is much more "clean," *i.e.*, devoid of spots of older bark, and of a warm white in colour. It is further distinguished by its more slender habit, and smaller leaves which are not bluish like those of the Wandoo. The trunk is often fifteen



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feet long and up to 12 inches in diameter. The bark is about one-quarter of an inch thick and orange-yellow in fracture. As in the case of the other Mallets this bark is easily stripped during the winter and spring months. The timber is light brown in colour, very hard and dense, but straight-grained and easily split. The bark yields 32 per cent. of tannins.

The leaves are lanceolate in outline and long-pointed. Although green they are scarcely lustrous, but still are green and not of the blue-green which characterizes so many of the other white-barked trees. The flowers are borne in umbels which usually consist of from 6 to 12 flowers. The peduncles are slender and round, and the flower-stalks (pedicels) short and slender. The operculum or bud-cap is very distinctive, being long and conical, and much narrower than the swollen, almost globular, furrowed calyx-tube. The flowers are yellowish-white and not large. The fruit, too, is very distinctive, being depressed globular with a narrow flat rim and long protruding slender awl-shaped valves which often adhere towards the summits.

This tree is most closely related to the Morrels, and more especially to the Merrit, differing from the former in the smooth bark, and from the latter in the globular ribbed fruits. This ribbing of the fruits, however, is a variable character, but the fruit is rarely, if ever, smooth.

The White Mallet is found scattered throughout the Great Southern districts between Williams and Katanning, thence eastward to Ravenshorpe. It occurs on gravelly hills or slopes, usually associated with Wandoo or other Mallets, but unlike the Mallets the trees require space in which to develop.

A Mallee form is very common along the south coast between Albany and Esperance, especially around Hopetoun, where it is the most common eucalypt occurring behind the sand dunes.