

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TREES.

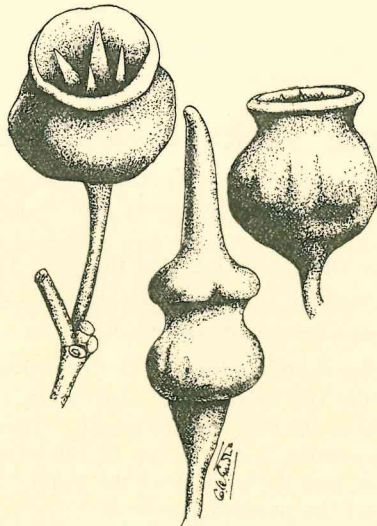
## No. XVI.—THE MERRIT.

*(Eucalyptus Flocktoniae, Maiden.)*

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

The Merrit has caused much confusion in the past because of its superficial resemblance to other trees. To many it is a "Soft Salmon Gum," because of its soft timber; to others it is a "White Gum"; and again it is commonly known as "Silver Mallet," or "Silver Salmon Gum." In fact, during recent years much Mallet bark has been adulterated by the inclusion of Merrit, the bark being taken from young trees.

If one looks closely at a Merrit tree and compares it with a near-by Salmon Gum, the difference is quite obvious. The Merrit has a thicker layer of leaves to the crown, and these leaves are of a dark green, and they are larger than those of the yellow-green, very glossy leaves of the Salmon Gum. The bark of the two trees may be almost identical, or the Merrit may have a thick bark compared with that of the Salmon Gum; while the timber of the Merrit is lighter in colour, and more soft and straight-grained than is the case with Salmon Gum. In some places, however, the Merrit becomes a typical Blackbutt, having a rough dark bark at the base of the trunk; and then it is difficult to identify, except by the dark foliage, and the curious buds and fruits.

Merrit (*Eucalyptus Flocktoniae*, Maiden).

(Slightly enlarged.)

The Merrit tree usually grows to a height of 50 feet, and has the upright branching habit of the Salmon Gum. The trunk measures up to 12 inches in diameter, and the bark is about one-quarter of an inch thick, and sheds externally in thick flakes. The timber is pink or red,

and fairly dense, but soft, and very straight-grained. The bark contains up to 18.5 per cent. tannins, which makes it suitable for tanning skins and hides.

The adult leaf of the Merrit is dark green and shiny, but not glossy like that of the Salmon Gum. The yellowish-white flowers are borne in drooping umbels on stout terete peduncles. The pedicels are shorter than the calyx-tube. This calyx-tube is urn-shaped, or inverted-pear-shaped in form, and usually widens out into a lip at the orifice. The operculum or bud-cap is narrow-conical and tapers to a long point, and is usually ribbed or striated. The fruit is most distinctive, being urn- or vase-shaped (see illustration), with usually a prominent lip. The anthers are small and broadly ovate, and open in short, wide slits.

The range of the Merrit extends from the Goldfields through to Kondinin and Kulin in the west, and eastwards into South Australia. It may be said generally to be included in the area bounded on the north by the Eastern Goldfields Railway, and on the west by the line joining the ends of the railways which branch eastwards from the Great Southern. It is very common around Mount Holland and the Bremer Range, and still fairly plentiful around Salmon Gums.

In burnt country the seedlings grow in profusion. The young plants may be recognized without any difficulty by reason of their broad bluish leaves, which continue down the stem, forming wings for some distance below the origin of the leaf. The tree when felled does not sucker like its sister, the Salmon Gum, and in this it resembles the Mallets.