

THE SEARCH FOR EUCALYPTUS MUNDIJONGENSIS

During the 1990's the Serpentine-Jarrahdale Land Conservation District Committee had a problem of recognition and acceptance by the local farming community. Formally created only 18 months earlier, the land care group had to promote itself. That is, to let people know who they were and what their task was. While long-term projects were being developed, there was a need to create short-term projects too. Not only to keep the members interested - but to draw community attention to themselves.

At the time Kaye Taylor, who worked at my nursery, Outspan Gardens, had a brilliant idea. Kaye has a great affinity for trees and was always reading about them. Why not promote a search for this "missing" tree? Why not indeed! The promotion was multi faceted - it was designed to draw attention to two environmentally concerned groups, the Wildflower Society and the Serpentine/Jarrahdale Land Conservation District Committee, to promote awareness of our unique flora and get involved in caring for our own back yard. The Mundijong tuart was first botanically described in 1909 and last officially seen in Jarrahdale in 1918! After 72 years would there still be one around? Let's give it a go!

The formal search began in June 1990 when A3 sized posters were posted to all Shire Councils in the South West. Someone suggested all police stations should be contacted, after all, its part of their task to track down missing persons. An article was published in The Countryman in August 1990 and in the Western Farmer. Posters were distributed at the Wildflower Society's State Conference held at Cecil Andrews Senior High School, West Armadale on 30th June. John Colwill also mentioned the project on his ABC gardening talk back programme.

That weekend, the Armadale/Kelmscott Wildflower Society committee decided the \$100 reward be would presented at the Society's Earth Care Environment week display, to be held in the Armadale shopping centre on Saturday 15th September at 11am. Mr Bob Pearce, local MLA and Minister of the Environment was invited to do the honours. Mr Ian Blackburn was to stand in should the Minister not be able to come. Mr. Pearce accepted the invitation not only to present the reward but also to officially open the Earth Care show. This event actually took place on 11th September at 10am.

At the time of this awareness project, I was Vice President of the Wildflower Society and Chairman of the Landcare Committee. Therefore, there was no problem or conflict in either group. I received 35 tree specimens for identification from as far as Esperance - none turned out to be the missing tree. One very interesting specimen came from Mrs Midge Richardson of Lowlands Estate, Serpentine. There stood a grove of very old tuarts growing well outside their normal habitat. Dr Steven Hopper, now of Kings Park, agreed to do the final identifying. He visited the grove, took photos, leaves and buds. Unfortunately the trees were not distinct enough to be another specie or sub-specie.

Time ran out - no Mundijong tuart came to light so the committee decided on plan two! The award would be presented to the most interesting specimens submitted. Midge won the award not only for the interesting grove, but for her overall dedication to the conservation of our natural heritage. Midge was delighted with her prize; the book "Rare and Endangered flora of Western Australia".

That wasn't the end though. A month later Alex Hart, ex Forestry officer, phoned me saying - "there was Mundijong tuart growing close to the beach at Matilda Bay". I hot footed it there, which happened to be just after a storm, and found plenty of leaves buds and flowers. "Sorry", said Steve. The variation still falls within the acceptable variation of the tuart [*gomphocephala*]

On 13th December 1990, a letter arrived from Steve - a *Mundijongensis* tree has been found! The letter is printed here in full. A second prize giving ceremony was hastily organised - this time at the CALM offices in Kelmscott. Mr Bob Muir duly received his reward via Mr. Pearce. I collected seed of the branch that was presented and grew 15 seedlings. With due ceremony, and a commemorative plaque, one was planted in Jarrahdale on the road verge at the kindergarten. Twelve years later it stands 4 to 5 metres tall, flowers regularly, and looks healthy. Another is growing in Paterson Road Mundijong, near the Shire offices; well protected by a solid fence. Two more are growing in the Mundijong pound.

In conclusion I must claim the exercise to promote awareness of our natural heritage was very successful. The exercise also brought to light a tree growing near Crooked Brook siding south of Dardanup. Mr. Robert Powell found it there in 1970, and it was positively identified by Ian Brooker of Canberra. Ian distributed seedlings to Kings Park; some were also planted near Pery Lakes and at Lake Monger. None have survived. My seedlings too proved very variable in appearance and vigour. Our quest unearthed information that there is a plantation growing in Algeria, North Africa. This knowledge makes one wonder about their quality.

REWARD

\$100⁰⁰

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS

FOR THE RECOGNITION AND CAPTURE
ALIVE

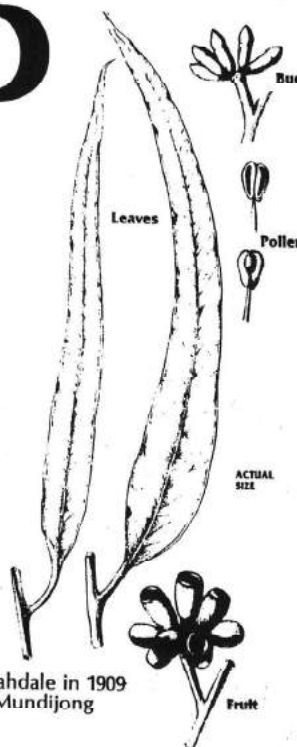
OF

EUCALYPTUS MUNDIJONGENSIS

95. *E. MUNDIJONGENSIS*, Maiden. "Mundijong Tuart."
Part I., p. 305, Pl. 207, fig. 3; Part XXXIV., Pl. 140, fig. 11 (intermediate leaf).

A tall tree, 80-100 feet high (about 24-30 m.). Bark rough and persistent on trunk, smooth on branches. Timber pale, of good quality. Juvenile leaves opposite for 3-4 pairs, thick, coriaceous, broadly lanceolate, dull green, 12 x 5 cm. Mature leaves alternate, petiolate, narrow-lanceolate, falcate-acuminate, 10-15 x 1-2 cm. Umbels axillary, 5-10 flowered. Peduncles strap-shaped, 15-20 mm. long. Buds cylindrical, sessile or nearly so, 15-18 x 7-8 mm. or larger. Operculum conical, about half the length of the calyx-tube. Anthers versatile, obovate, emarginate, opening in parallel slits; gland ovate. Fruit cylindrical, shortly pedicellate or sessile, rather thin, 15 x 10 mm.; disc thin, very small; valves deeply enclosed. W.A.—Mundijong.

A very rare species allied to the Tuart, *E. gomphocephala*, occurring in sandy loam with a clay subsoil. Flowers October or November.



First spotted standing on a street verge in Jarrahdale in 1909 and again alongside the railway line near Mundijong sometime during 1918.

PARENTAGE:

This tree is closely related to the well known West Australian aristocratic family — the Tuarts. However, some botanists suspect a touch of Wandoo sap runs in its branches.

CHARACTERISTICS:

A tall and handsome tree, it is nevertheless very shy and goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid detection. Its ability to stand very still for extended periods and to merge inconspicuously with its surrounds has led to the total despair of many an enthusiastic botanist.

A COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROJECT

PROMOTED BY THE

SERPENTINE-JARRAHDAL LAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMITTEE

AND THE

WILDFLOWER SOCIETY OF W.A. ARMADALE-KELMSCOTT BRANCH.

NOTE: Only one reward will be paid out, though it is sincerely hoped many trees will be found.

Post specimens of leaves and buds to:-
Wildflower Society,
P.O. Box 124,
Armadale, W.A. 6112
(Together with S A F)



Eucalyptus Mundijongensis
Found growing in the Wilbinga area (1991)





E. Mundijongensis growing in Dardanup



Presentation to Midge Richardson



Leigh, 13, and Robyn Sari, 12, look for the rare *Eucalyptus* species.

Sleuths hunt missing tuart

THE hunt is on for *Eucalyptus mundijongensis*, a native tree species conservationists fear may have all but disappeared.

The Armadale-Kelmscott branch of the Wildflower Society of WA and Serpentine-Jarradale Land Conservation District Committee are offering a \$100 reward to encourage people to track down the tree more commonly known as the Mundijong tuart.

Committee chairman Bob Harrington said a Jarradale example of the rare species (allied to the tuart, *E. gonphoccephala*) was described in 1909 and the tree was known to have occurred near Mundijong in 1918.

"Since then little has been heard of it, although I suspect there are at least two specimens around," Mr Harrington said.

"A distinguishing feature is the bark, which is coarse and stringy on the trunk but smooth on the branches."

The Mundijong tuart is described as a tall tree (from 24-30m) which produces good quality timber and flowers in October or November.

A full botanical description is contained on posters which the two groups are circulating to promote the search.

Mr Harrington said the communi-

ty awareness project was designed to raise awareness that rare trees were disappearing, promote environmental consciousness, and highlight the work of groups like wildflower societies and land conservation district committees.

He said only one reward would be paid out, although the groups hoped more than one tree would be found.

The presentation was planned as part of Armadale Environment Week from September 10 to 15.

Leaf and bud specimens should be sent to The Wildflower Society, PO Box 124, Armadale 6112.

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• Mundijong Primary School's youngest student, Danise Mills, and oldest student, Luke Daisley, plant one of the eucalypts in the school's grounds. Picture: STEPHEN WHITE

Planting a piece of history

A VARIETY of gum tree last seen in Mundijong 30 years ago was returned to the area in a special tree planting last week.

The eucalyptus mundijongensis once grew near the local railway station and was last documented by botanist Bob Har-

ington in 1965.

But three years ago when Mr Harrington, chairman of the Serpentine-Jarradale Landcare district committee, checked on the trees' growth, they had disappeared.

He mounted a statewide

search, had a poster drawn up and offered a \$100 reward for live specimens of the variety.

After nine months, some trees were found in Withings, south of Lancelin, and their seeds have been carefully nurtured into young saplings.

Students from Mundijong Primary School planted two of the trees in their school grounds

and two were planted in Jarradale by children from Jarradale Primary School.

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