Alphitonia excelsa (A.Cunn. ex Fenzl) Benth.

**Family:**
Rhamnaceae


**Common name:**
Asg, Red; Humbug; Leatherjacket; Coopers Wood; Mountain Ash; Soap Tree; Red Tweedie; Sarsaparilla; Red Almond; RED ASH

**Stem**
Usually encountered as a small tree 4-20 m, less than 30 cm dbh but recorded to 40 cm dbh. Bark usually somewhat fissured and corky towards the base of the trunk.

**Leaves**
Leaf blades about 3-18.5 x 1.2-6 cm, white or whitish on the underside. Stipules long and narrow, about 3-10 x 1 mm, gradually tapering to a fine point. Freshly broken twigs emit a faint sarsaparilla or liniment odour. Young shoots rusty hairy.

**Flowers**
Flowers greenish. Calyx lobes acute, about 1.5-2 mm long. Petals hooded, about 1.5 mm long. Stamens enveloped in the petals. Disk thin, surface not corrugated. Style extended at anthesis.

**Fruit**
Fruits 5-9 mm diam, globular. Mesocarp black and glossy or powdery at maturity. Seeds inflexibly attached to the receptacle.

**Seedlings**
Cotyledons ovate, elliptic or obovate, about 8-16 x 9-11 mm. First pair of leaves toothed,undersides clothed in matted hairs. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade underside clothed in white, downy hairs; hairs on stem erect, pale brown. Stipules hairy, linear, up to 3 mm long. Seed germination time 11 to 37 days.

**Distribution and Ecology**
Occurs in WA, NT, CYP, NEQ, CEQ and southwards to south-eastern New South Wales. Altitudinal range in northern Australia from sea level to 800 m. Grows in open forest, monsoon forest and dry rain forest.

**Natural History & Notes**

The leaves possess a high saponin content sufficient to make a froth if they are crushed and shaken in water. Cribb (1981).

Sometimes grows large enough to produce millable logs. Produces a useful general purpose timber. Wood specific gravity 0.77. Cause et al. (1989).

**Synonyms**

**RFK Code**
480