

# *Alphitonia petriei* Braid & C.T.White

## Family:

Rhamnaceae

Braid, K.W. (1925) *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information* 1925(4): 178. Type: Johnston River, Ladbrook 46; Kuranda, White (1925) 43.

## Common name:

Pink Almond; Whiteleaf; White Ash; Soap Tree; Sarsaparilla; Red Ash; Red Almond; Foambark; Ash, White; Ash, Pink; Ash, Red; Pink ash

## Stem

Strong liniment odour produced by the inner blaze or the cambial layer. A minority of observers liken the odour to that of sarsaparilla.

## Leaves

Leaf blades about 6.5-16 x 2.5-7.5 cm, almost white on the underside. Stipules small and inconspicuous, about 1-3 mm long. Broken twigs produce an odour like that of the inner blaze.

## Flowers

Flowers cream to pale green. Calyx lobes 2-2.5 mm long. Petals hooded, about 1.5-2.5 mm long. Stamens enveloped in the petals. Disk thin, surface not corrugated. Style extended at anthesis.

## Fruit

Fruits about 7-15 mm diam. Mesocarp powdery at maturity. Seeds inflexibly attached to the receptacle.

## Seedlings

Cotyledons about 6-8 mm long. First pair of leaves occasionally with a few teeth. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade white on the underside from matted downy hairs; petiole often clothed in tortuous, brown hairs; stipules short, hairy. Seed germination time 14 to 297 days.

## Distribution and Ecology

Probably endemic to Australia, occurs in CYP, NEQ, CEQ and southwards to north-eastern New South Wales. Altitudinal range in CYP and NEQ from 100-1200 m. Grows in well developed rain forest on a variety of sites but is more common in upland and mountain areas. This species is favoured by disturbance and is a characteristic component of rain forest regrowth, often dominating the regrowth along new roads through rain forest.

## Natural History & Notes

Seeds eaten by King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas, fallen fruit eaten by Cassowaries. Cooper & Cooper (1994).

The most distinctive character of this tree is the scent of the leaves and fresh bark; they smell of oil of wintergreen, a scent recognized as one of the ingredients of sarsaparilla drinks and of various proprietary lines such as some toothpastes. Cribb (1981).

Sometimes grows large enough to produce millable logs. Produces a useful general purpose timber.

Wood specific gravity 0.51. Cause et al. (1989).

## RFK Code

30



Flower and buds. © Barry Jago



Flowers. © Barry Jago



Leaves and Flowers. © CSIRO



Fruit, two views and seeds. © W. T. Cooper



Leaves and fruit. © CSIRO



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO

