

## *Atalaya variifolia* (F.Muell.) Benth.

### Family:

Sapindaceae

Bentham, G. (1863) *Flora Australiensis* 1: 463.

### Stem

Usually flowers and fruits as a shrub about 3-5 m tall.

### Leaves

Leaves very variable, sometimes simple, sometimes +/- trifoliolate, pinnate or deeply lobed. Leaf bearing twigs longitudinally grooved or striated and clothed in simple brown hairs. Compound leaf rhachis markedly winged except at the point of attachment of the leaflets. Leaflet blades about 17 x 1-2 cm, +/- sessile on the compound leaf rhachis. Terminal buds and young shoots clothed in brown hairs. Lateral veins forming loops inside or on the blade margin.

### Flowers

Panicles about 10-24 cm long. Terminal flowers in each branch appear to be bisexual while the other flowers in each branch appear to be male. Flowers about 12-15 mm diam. Sepals about 2-3.5 mm long, outer surface silky hairy. Petals about 6 x 4 mm, outer surface silky hairy, margins ciliate. Each petal with two flaps of tissue or a pocket on the inner surface extending from near the base to about 1/3 the height of each petal. Disk completely surrounding the base of the ovary. Stamens or staminodes eight, filaments hairy, inserted between the disk and the ovary. Ovary densely hairy.

### Fruit

Fruits flat, winged, about 4-5 x 1.5-1.7 cm. Seed about 7-12 mm long. Embryo +/- filling the seed, one cotyledon curled around the other which is folded over on itself. Radicle on the edge and much smaller than the cotyledons.

### Seedlings

Cotyledons thick and fleshy, about 13-15 x 4-6 mm, one cotyledon much larger than the other, venation not obvious, base sagittate. First pair of true leaves sub-opposite. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade +/- linear, more than 10 times as long as broad, about 15-20 x 0.8 cm, intramarginal vein close to the blade margin. Petiole very short or absent. Terminal bud and stem clothed in prostrate, pale brown hairs. Seed germination time 7 days.

### Distribution and Ecology

Endemic to Australia, occurs in WA, NT, CYP and NEQ. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 600 m. Usually grows in open forest but also found in beach forest, vine thickets and monsoon forest.

### Natural History & Notes

Food plant for the larval stages of the Miskin's Blue Butterfly. Common & Waterhouse (1981).

The attractive foliage along with the panicles of white flowers and the straw coloured winged fruits make this a desirable shrub for the garden. It will also withstand dry conditions.

### Synonyms

*Thouinia variifolia* F.Muell., *Fragmenta Phytographiae Australiae* 1: 45(1858), Type: In locis aridioribus et rupibus fere totius Australiae intratropicae hucusque exploratae.

### RFK Code

3197



Leaves and Flowers. © CSIRO



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO



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