

# *Calotropis procera* (Aiton) R.Br. ex W.T.Aiton

## Family:

Apocynaceae

Aiton, W.T. (1811) *Hortus Kewensis* 2: 78.

## Common name:

Rubber Tree; Small Crown-flower; Auricula Tree; Calotrope; Kapok Tree; King's Crown; Camel Weed

## Stem

Usually flowers and fruits as a shrub about 3-4 m tall.

## Leaves

Petioles and twigs produce a milky exudate. Leaves rather large, leaf blades about 11.5-18 x 6-15 cm, base +/- cordate. Numerous (20-30) small, linear glands present in the leaf axils or on the base of the leaf blade.

## Flowers

Flowers about 23-25 mm diam., pedicels about 15-27 mm long. Sepals cream or white. Corolla lobes cream but pink or purplish towards the apex. Pollinia green and somewhat sticky, translator brown. Each flower producing significant quantities of nectar.

## Fruit

Fruit large, about 10-13 x 6-7 cm producing a milky exudate when cut. Seeds winged, very numerous, each about 8-10 x 5 mm, attached by broad shiny, white funicles. Testa clothed in short, erect, white hairs. Cotyledons ovate, shaped like a tombstone, much wider than the radicle.

## Seedlings

Cotyledons broadly elliptic, about 16-25 x 13-15 mm, apex very rounded, base attenuate, exudate milky. Petiole channelled on the upper surface. First pair of leaves stipulate, stipules small. At the tenth leaf stage: leaves obovate, both the upper and lower surfaces densely clothed in a spider-web-like hairy material which is easily rubbed off with the finger nail. Exudate milky, copious and rapid, from all parts of the plant. Usually 2 brown hair-like structures (glands) 1 mm long, on the upper surface of the leaf blade near the petiole, one on each side of the midrib. Stipules about 1 mm long, linear. Terminal bud and stem woolly white. Seed germination time 7 to 11 days.

## Distribution and Ecology

An introduced plant originally from Africa and Asia now naturalised across northern Australia and also in parts of central Australia. Occurs in WA, NT, NEQ and the northern part of CEQ. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 700 m. Usually grows in open forest but also found on the margins of monsoon forest and beach forest.

## Natural History & Notes

A poisonous plant causing problems in both man and animals. However, although reported to be unpalatable, it is frequented by cattle and eaten by them occasionally without ill effect. Everist (1974).

A food source of the larval stage of the Lesser Wanderer Butterfly. Common & Waterhouse (1981).

Sap toxic if eaten. Austin, D. F. 1998. Poisonous Plants of Southern Florida.

The milky sap is very irritating, and toxic enough to have been used as an arrow poison. There has been some medicinal use of the flowers and leaves but the root-bark has been of greater importance. Cribb (1981).

## Synonyms

***Asclepias procera* Aiton**, *Hort. Kew* 1: 305(1789), Type: N. J. Jacquin, *Observ. Bot.* 3: t. 69 (1768), as *Asclepias gigantea*; lecto, fide S. I. Ali, *Note Roy. Bot. Gard. Edinb.* 38: 290 (1980).

## RFK Code

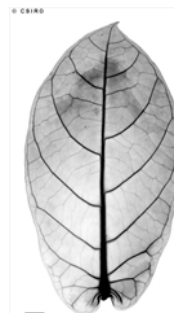
3030



Leaves and flowers. © CSIRO



Leaves and fruit. © CSIRO



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



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