

Denhamia obscura (A.Rich.) Meisn. ex Walp.

Family:
Celastraceae

Walpers, W.G. (1842) *Repertorium Botanices Systematicae* : 203.

Stem

An orange layer usually visible under the dead bark, particularly the thicker areas of dead bark.

Leaves

Leaf blades about 5-12 x 1.5-3.5 cm, almost white on the underside, particularly the older leaves.
Leaf bearing twigs reddish.

Flowers

Petals 2-3.5 mm long. Staminal filaments 0.5-1 mm long. Style very short or absent. Ovary with six ovules per locule.

Fruit

Capsules with woody valves. Capsules about 2.5-4 cm long.

Seedlings

Cotyledons elliptic, about 15-20 x 10-15 mm, with a midrib and about four other veins radiating from the base. First pair of leaves with two to three teeth on each side. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade margins with four or five sharply pointed teeth on each side; midrib raised on the upper surface; stipules small and inconspicuous, visible only with a lens. Seed germination time 47 days.

Distribution and Ecology

Endemic to Australia, occurs in WA and NT. Altitudinal range from near sea level to about 300 m. Often grows in open forest but also found in monsoon forest and related vegetation types.

Natural History & Notes

There is a chance that this species may have medicinal properties as the inner bark was used in cases of toothache.

This species is one of the few native plants known to have been used as an aphrodisiac by the aborigines. Cribb (1981).

Synonyms

***Denhamia leucocarpum* Steud.**, *Nomenclator Botanicus* 1: 491(1840). ***Leucocarpum obscurum* A.Rich.**, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe 2, Sertum Austrolabianum* : 46(1834), Type: Northern Territory, Melville Island, (not Moreton Bay), Fraser. ***Denhamia xanthosperma* F.Muell.**, *Transactions and Proceedings of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria* 3: 28(1859), Type: Northern Territory, Arnhem Land, F. Mueller s.n.; syn: MEL.

RFK Code

965



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO

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