

Myristica insipida R.Br.

Family:

Myristicaceae

Brown, R. (1810) *Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae* : 400. Type: v.v. flor. Delaps.

Common name:

Australian Nutmeg; Nutmeg; Native Nutmeg; Queensland Nutmeg

Stem

Bark exudate watery red, emerging in layers. Branches often at right angles to trunk.

Leaves

Leaf blades variable in size, about 11.5-20.5 x 7-10 cm, petioles hairy and about 8-15 mm long. Small oil dots visible with a lens. Young shoots and terminal buds clothed in prostrate, rusty brown hairs. Leaf blade much paler or whitish on the underside. Petiole channelled on the upper surface. Lateral veins slightly depressed on the upper surface and usually forming loops inside the blade margin. Leaf reticulate tertiary venation on lower leaf surface not visible.

Flowers

Male flowers in axillary fascicles or on woody tubercles; pedicel 1.5-3 mm long; calyx 4.5-5 mm long; androphore with scattered hairs near base or glabrous. Female flowers in fascicles of up to three; pedicel 0.5-1.5 mm long; calyx 3.8-4.2 mm long, ovary densely tomentose.

Fruit

Capsule about 30-50 x 20-27 mm, inner surface white, cream or yellowish. Aril deeply laciniate, enveloping the seed +/- like a net. Embryo very small, less than 1 mm long.

Seedlings

At the tenth leaf stage: leaves glaucous on the lower surface and densely clothed in pale, prostrate hairs and flat scales; petiole, stem and terminal bud clothed in pale brown hairs. Seed germination time 26 to 63 days.

Distribution and Ecology

Occurs in WA, NT, CYP, NEQ and CEQ. Altitudinal range from sea level to 1000 m. Grows in well developed rain forest, drier, more seasonal rain forest and monsoon forest. Also occurs in Malesia and the Solomon Islands.

Natural History & Notes

Jessup (2007) recognises two varieties in northern Australia: var. *insipida* (leaf length 2.5-3.5 times width; fruit 2.5-3.8 cm long); and var. *cimicifera* (leaf length 2-2.5 times width; fruit 3.5-4.2 cm long).

Although no hard evidence of toxicity is available, it is rather sobering to remember that commercial Nutmeg is toxic when taken in large quantities and can induce narcotic symptoms in smaller quantities.

Fruit eaten by Cassowaries, Musky Rat-kangaroos, Victoria's Riflebirds and Fruit pigeons. Cooper & Cooper (1994).

Produces a useful general purpose timber.

Wood specific gravity 0.56. Cause et al. (1989).

Synonyms

Myristica cimicifera* var. *typica* Warb.**, *Nova Acta Academiae Caesareae Leopoldino-Carolinae Germanicae Naturae Curiosorum* 68 : 501(1867). ***Myristica cimicifera* var. *insipida* (R.Br.) Warb.**, *Nova Acta Academiae Caesareae Leopoldino-Carolinae Germanicae Naturae Curiosorum* 68 : 501(1867). ***Myristica cimicifera* var. *typica* Warb.**, *Nova Acta Academiae Caesareae Leopoldino-Carolinae Germanicae Naturae Curiosorum* 68 : 501(1867). ***Myristica cimicifera* var. *acutifolia* Warb.**, *Nova Acta Academiae Caesareae Leopoldino-Carolinae Germanicae Naturae Curiosorum* 68 : 502(1867), Type: Verbreitung: Nordwest-Küste von Australien, Swan-River. Sammler: Ph. King, fr., Bruss., Deless ***Myristica cimicifera* R.Br. var. *cimicifera, *Nova Acta Academiae Caesareae Leopoldino-Carolinae Germanicae Naturae Curiosorum* 68 : 502(1867). ***Myristica cimicifera* R.Br.**, *Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae* : 400(1810), Type: B. v.s. flor. Masc. ***Myristica cimicifera* R.Br. var. *cimicifera***, *Nova Acta Academiae Caesareae Leopoldino-Carolinae Germanicae Naturae Curiosorum* 68 : 502(1867). ***Myristica cimicifera* Sol. ex R.Br.**, *Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae* : 400(1810), Type: Endeavour River, Qld, 1770, J. Banks & D. Solander.

RFK Code

85



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