

Triunia erythrocarpa Foreman

Family:
Proteaceae

Foreman, D.B. (1987) *Muelleria* 6: 302. Type: State Forests Reserve 310, Swipers Logging Area, 8.x.1973, B. Hyland 6919 (flowering collection). (Holotype: QRS. Isotypes: BRI, NSW, QRS).

Common name:
Spice Bush

Stem

A small tree seldom exceeding 30 cm dbh. Fine oak grain in the wood and a similar pattern in the inner blaze.

Leaves

Oak grain in the twigs. Leaf blades about 6-10 x 2-7 cm. Midrib depressed on the upper surface of the leaf blade. Lateral veins forming loops well inside the blade margin.

Flowers

Inflorescence about 7.5 cm long. Flowers paired, pedicels ferruginous hairy, 4-7 mm long, without a common peduncle. Tepals sparsely ferruginous hairy, about 12-20 mm long, anterior tepal free, the other three tepals cohering for part of their length in the basal section. Anthers about 2.5 mm long, rostrate at the apex, filaments about 1 mm long. Hypogynous glands two, free, about 0.5 mm long. Ovary sessile, densely ferruginous-tomentose, about 1.5-2 mm long. Ovules 2. Styles about 22-25 mm long.

Fruit

Fruits bright red (scarlet), globular, about 18-35 mm diam., glabrous. Pericarp about 2.5-5 mm thick. Seed globular, about 15 mm diam. The seeds of this tree are poisonous and if consumed reduce the heart rate to very low levels.

Seedlings

First pair of leaves elliptic with about 1-6 prominent teeth along the margin on the upper half of the leaf blade. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade obovate, glabrous, apex acuminate, base attenuate, margin often serrate, teeth none or about 1-6 on the upper half of the margin; lateral veins form loops inside the blade margin. Petiole and stem with a few to numerous reddish brown hairs. Seed germination time 49 to 217 days.

Distribution and Ecology

Endemic to NEQ. Altitudinal range from 450-1200 m. Grows as an understory tree in well developed upland and mountain rain forest.

Natural History & Notes



Flower Buds. © Stanley Breeden



Leaves and fruit. © CSIRO



Fruit, side view, transverse section and seed. © W. T. Cooper



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO

This species produces attractive bright red (scarlet) fruits. The seeds have a pleasant flavor but they should be completely avoided. One collector, who ate a part of one seed, ended up in hospital with a heart rate well below the normal rate. A bulk sample of this same fruit collection was sent to the Queensland Government Botanist of the time with a warning about the consequences of eating the seeds. Despite this, and despite his experience with poisonous plants, he tasted a seed and ended up with a much reduced heart rate exactly like the original victim. Everist in Litt. documented his experience and informed the author that he alleviated his symptoms by drinking a strong cup of tea heavily laced with sugar.

Seeds and flesh eaten by Musky Rat-kangaroos. Cooper & Cooper (1994).

A very attractive shrub or small tree which produces very fragrant, showy, terminal heads of flowers. Does well as a potted plant.

RFK Code

927



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, hypogeal germination. © CSIRO

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