

Plant of the Week

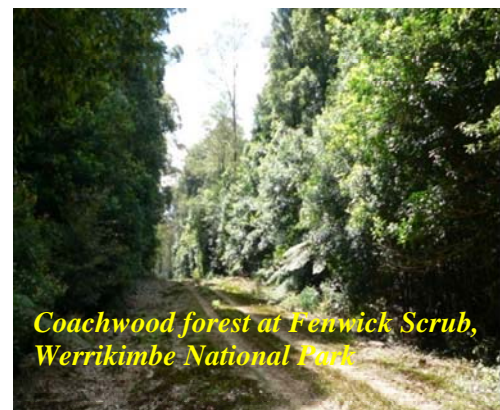
Ceratopetalum apetalum Coachwood



Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) is one of the very few rainforest species that flourishes in the gullies of Sydney bushland. The trees are very distinctive, tall, with dark green, glossy leaves, mottled grey and white bark and flowers with white petal-like sepals that later turn pink. **Coachwood** grows in coastal rainforests of NSW and Queensland and belongs in the plant family **Cunoniaceae**. It is closely related to **Sydney Christmas Bush** (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) and **Black Wattle** (*Callicoma serratifolia*).

As the name suggests, Coachwood was used in early days for coach building but it has a multitude of other applications. The timber is used extensively for decorative work and also for flooring, furniture and boat masts. Seating in the High Court of Australia in Canberra was manufactured from timber cut from the rainforests west of **Wauchope** on the NSW north coast. It is said that the freshly sawn timber has a fragrance not unlike caramel¹. During WW2, when Canadian Birchwood was unavailable, Coachwood was used in the construction of **Mosquito Fighter Bombers** at Bankstown Aerodrome². At the Lithgow Small Arms Factory, Coachwood was also used for **303 rifle butts**³.

If you have room, consider planting a Coachwood in your garden. Unlike eucalypts, they don't drop leaves, are reasonably slow growing and will provide you with lovely dark green foliage. Coachwoods provide suitable roosting sites for Powerful Owls, and parrots eat the mature seeds.⁴



Map modified from Australia's Virtual Herbarium: <http://www.chah.gov.au/avh/avhServlet>

¹ Wood Solutions: <http://www.woodsolutions.com.au/Wood-Species/coachwood>

² RAAF Museum, Point Cook: http://www.airforce.gov.au/raafmuseum/exhibitions/restoration/dh_98.htm

³ Mudgee District Local History: http://www.mudgeehistory.com.au/rylstone_kandos/rylstone_kandos34.html

⁴ Hornsby Shire Council: <http://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/media/documents/environment-and-waste/bushland-and-biodiversity/native-tree-database-fact-sheets/Fact-sheet-Ceratopetalum-apetalum-Coachwood.pdf>

*Text and photographs: Alison Downing & Kevin Downing, 4.11.2011
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