



Plant of the Week

Eucalyptus botryoides

Bangalay, Southern Mahogany

The **genus** *Eucalyptus* is huge, with more than **700 species**. Apart from twelve species from New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines, all are Australian endemics, 236 species occur in New South Wales alone. What a nightmare! Within the '**genus**' there are six '**sub-genera**' which are further divided

into '**sections**'. *Eucalyptus botryoides* - **Bangalay** (pronounced "Bang-alley"), or **Southern Mahogany** - together with **blue gums** (e.g. *E. saligna* – Sydney Blue Gum), **grey gums** (e.g. *E. punctata*) and **red mahoganies** (e.g. *E. resinifera*) is included in the **Section Transversaria** of the **Subgenus Symphiomirtus**¹! Phew!!



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This is a coastal tree, common on sandy soils, south from Newcastle and the Hunter River Victoria's Lakes Entrance in East Gippsland. In the 1960s and 70s it was widely planted in Sydney and surrounding suburbs and there are a number of trees in the MGSM car park.

The name 'Southern Mahogany' may have originated from the similarity of the timber to that of Brazilian Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*, Meliaceae), a tree which is more closely related to Australian Red Cedar than it is to *Eucalyptus*. Southern Mahogany timber is hard, pink to dark red, and in the past has been used for railway sleepers, fence posts and firewood. Now there is a growing demand for furniture and parquetry².

¹ Harden, G.W. (Editor) 1991. Flora of New South Wales. Volume 2. New South Wales University Press.

² The Victorian Woodworker's Association, www.vwa.org.au/des_vichard_sm.htm

Map: Wikipedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucalyptus_botryoides

Text and Photographs:

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