



# Oliver's Sassafras

ID # 251



## An aromatic native



The plant is a source of essential oils which are sometimes gathered from the wild and used medicinally, and as a food flavouring.

The bark has a strong aromatic perfume and a 9% tannin content which made it astringent. For these two reasons it was used as a relatively pleasant diarrhoea treatment, and was prescribed as such by doctors of the late nineteenth century.

The freshly broken twigs emit an odour like that of sarsaparilla.

The fragrant wood is harvested from the wild and traded as "camphorwood", and used for indoor work, lining and cabinet work.

### Interesting fact

*Cinnamomum oliveri* is aromatic however, true cinnamon comes from the bark of *Cinnamomum verum* and *Cinnamomum cassia*.

**Family:** Lauraceae

**Genus:** *Cinnamomum*

**Botanic name:** *Cinnamomum oliveri*

*Cinnamomum* – from Ancient Greek word (κιννάμωμον) and via Latin referring to the spice, cinnamon; *oliveri* – named after Daniel Oliver (1830–1916) a British botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

**Also known as:** Camphorwood, Oliver's Sassafras, black sassafras and Cinnamon Wood

**Origin:** Endemic to Australia, from the Illawarra district in New South Wales to Cape York Peninsula at the northern tip of Australia. The southernmost limit of natural distribution is on the volcanic cliffs above the town of Gerroa and nearby on the sand in rainforest behind Seven Mile Beach, New South Wales.

**Habitat:** Common in warm temperate rainforest areas on sedimentary soils in cool mountain situations. Also seen in subtropical rainforest. It grows from sea level to 1000m altitude.

**Description:** A strongly aromatic medium to large rainforest tree growing to around 30m tall and 75cm in diameter.



The trunk is grey or brown with vertical lines.

Leaves are opposite, simple with wavy margins, smooth, lanceolate, pointed, gradually tapering to the base. They are up to 150mm long, and up to 40mm broad. They are shiny green above and bluish grey below.



Small creamy fragrant flowers appear from October to November.



The fruit is a drupe (a peach, plum, olive-type fruit), blue-black or black oval shaped and shiny. Fruit ripens between February and April with fruiting occurring about every seven years.

**Uses:** Fruit is eaten by rainforest birds including the white-headed pigeon, pied currawong and green catbird as well as being a food plant for the larval stages of the Blue Triangle Butterfly.

**Propagation and cultivation:** Like many rainforest plants the most successful method of propagation is to remove the fleshy seed coating to assist seed germination. The seed has short longevity due to deterioration on drying.

### Sources:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinnamomum\\_oliveri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinnamomum_oliveri)
- <https://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=sp&name=Cinnamomum~oliveri>
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