



# Ball Nut Tree

ID # 293



### What's in a name?

The species was formally described in 1862 by Victorian Government Botanist Ferdinand von Mueller based on plant material collected near the Clarence River in northern New South Wales and the Brisbane River in Queensland. In his publication *Fragmenta Phytographiae Australiae* Mueller named the plant *Helicia praealta*. The species was transferred to the genus *Macadamia* in 1901 by Queensland Colonial Botanist Frederick Manson Bailey and then to *Floydia* in 1975 by Lawrie Johnson and Barbara Briggs after A. G. Floyd, who researched NSW rainforest trees.

Why the common name of Ball Nut – probably because of the shape of the fruit – but Possum Nut? We haven't been able to discover that yet!



**Propagation and cultivation:** Hardy in most locations. Prefers deep soil, plenty of water and freedom from grass competition. And worth growing for its scented flowers and beautiful shady crown.

**Uses:** The timber is considered suitable for cabinet work (similar to Silky Oak) but the species is vulnerable in the wild.

**Family:** *Proteaceae*

**Genus:** *Floydia*

**Botanic name:** *Floydia praealta*

*Floydia* after A. G. Floyd, Research Section, Forestry Commission of NSW, Coffs Harbour who researched NSW rainforest trees; *praealta* from Latin meaning very high or tall.

**Also known as:** Ball Nut, Possum Nut, Beefwood, and Big Nut

**Origin:** Native to Australia. It is a somewhat rare tree found growing only in the rainforests of South Eastern Queensland and Northern New South Wales.

**Habitat:** The tree grows in riverine and subtropical rainforest, usually on soils derived from basalt. This species is now threatened because its habitat has been cleared. In fact, currently *Floydia praealta* is known from less than 20 sites in South East Queensland and less than five sites in New South Wales.

**Description:** It is a medium to large sized tree and grows to about 30m. The bark is rough, brown and slightly wrinkled. The foliage is thick and glossy with leaves 7–30cm long, 2–4.5cm wide, tapering at the bases and rounded at the apex. Margins are slightly wavy.

The Ball Nut flowers in summer and fruits in winter. The small cream coloured flowers are arranged in pairs 7–20cm long They have a distinctive musty perfume.

The brown fruit is woody and globular and up to 5cm in diameter containing one or two seeds.

The tree has a superficial resemblance to the closely related *Macadamia* and could be confused with them but the fruit of the Ball Nut is inedible, some even say poisonous.



### Sources:

- <https://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=sp&name=Floydia~praealta>
- <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10332>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floydia>
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- <https://biodiversity.org.au/nsl/services/apni?name=Floydia+praealta&max=100&display=apni&search=true>
- <https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://id.biodiversity.org.au/node/apni/2918420>