



River She-oak

ID # 266



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The She-oak's Natural Enemies

Chalcidoid wasps (*Bootanellus* sp., *Torymidae*) destroy the seed in the fruits of *C. cunninghamiana* in Australia.



There is also a serious dieback problem of *C. cunninghamiana* existing in south eastern Queensland, caused by the repeated defoliation by the leaf-eating chrysomelid beetle, *Rhyparida limbatipennis*.



Indigenous Uses:

The Ngarrindjeri people of the Lower Murray River made clubs and boomerangs from She-oaks and wattles.

The timber was also used to extract resin.

Family: *Casuarinaceae*

Genus: *Casuarina*

Botanic name: *Casuarina cunninghamiana*

Casuarina from the Latin *casuarius* (a cassowary), likening the pendulous branchlets to the drooping feathers of the cassowary; *cunninghamiana* after Alan Cunningham (1791-1839), an explorer and botanical collector

Also known as: River She-oak, River Oak, Australian Beefwood

Origin: Australia, extending from the Daly River in the Northern Territory, north and east in Queensland and eastern New South Wales

Habitat: Light to medium well drained soils in an open sunny position near stream banks and moist swampy areas. It is drought and frost resistant.

Description: An evergreen long-lived, moderately fast growing tree, it is the tallest of the Casuarina, growing to a height of 30m with a spread of 6m. Its stem is erect and stout with dense furrowed bark. The leaves are greyish green long and needle-like.



The species flower once a year at any time from March to October depending on season and locality. Flowers are reddish brown in the male and red in the female.



Propagation and cultivation: It is usually dioecious, meaning individual trees are either male or female, but monoecious individuals exist. The pollen released from male flowers is wind borne. Propagation can be from seed or seedlings.

Uses: It is an important tree for stabilising riverbanks and for soil erosion prevention accepting wet and dry soils. The fruits are an important food source for red and yellow tailed black cockatoo. The foliage is quite palatable to stock but is considered useful only as emergency drought fodder.



The timber of the River She-oak with its distinctive red colouration resembling raw beef is suitable for furniture, flooring and construction uses, however, it is not considered a commercial species.

Sources:

Encyclopaedia Botanica Frances Bodkin
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