



Broad-leaved Paperbark



A familiar and resilient Aussie



Melaleuca quinquenervia, probably the most familiar of the paperbarks, has the ability to withstand droughts and floods and can regrow under the most adverse conditions whether it is fire or flood.

Even though it grows mainly in swampy environments so not overly prone to fires, the tree resprouts vigorously from epicormic shoots after bushfire with flowering within weeks of being burnt. And the seeds appear can germinate underwater on soil substrate.

Indigenous Uses

First Nations people used it for coolamons, bedding, bandages, shelter, and rafts. Leaves could flavour cooking and traditional ground ovens would include layers of paper bark.

Propagation and cultivation

Seeds dispersed by birds and bats. Grown from cuttings.

Family: *Myrtaceae*

Genus: *Melaleuca*

Botanic name: *Melaleuca quinquenervia*

Melaleuca, from the Greek *melas*, black and *leukos*, white, referring to black marks on the white trunks of some species due to fire; from the Latin *quinque* meaning five and *nervus*, vein, referring to the leaves usually having five conspicuous veins. First formally described in 1797 by Antonio Jose Cavanilles, a leading Spanish taxonomic botanist

Also known as: Broad-leaved Paperbark, Paper Bark tree, Punk tree (USA) or niaouli (New Caledonia)

Origin: Native to New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea and coastal eastern Australia, from Botany Bay in New South Wales northwards to Cape York Queensland

Habitat: Grows in swamps, wetlands, flood plains and near rivers and estuaries

Description: A medium to tall, evergreen spreading tree, 15m up to 25m high with a canopy spread to 5m. The bark is grey to beige, in layers like paper and peels off in strips.

The grey-green leaves are flat with a stiff leathery texture. They are alternate lanceolate to elliptic, 70mm long and about 25mm with 5 distinctive longitudinal veins.

Creamy white flowers are held in bottlebrush-like spikes up to 50mm long and flower in late spring and autumn. They are clustered in threes within the spike, and bearing up to 50 stamens.

Each flower part can drop about 30–70 small capsules which can be viable for almost ten years.

The seed is enclosed in these woody capsules that are arranged cylindrically around the stems.



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Sources:

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