



Bottle Tree

ID # 418



Interesting Facts

Aboriginal people made use of the trees through eating the roots of young plants and by consuming secretions from the trunk that were induced by wounds. Fibre obtained from the species was used to make nets.

The leaves have also been used for fodder, and Queensland farmers often leave bottle trees as a potential food source when land is cleared. During drought conditions, whole trees have been felled to feed stock.

Did you know?



Bottle trees are commonly found planted in streets and parks, on farms, and as features in gardens. In fact, an avenue in Roma, Queensland, was planted between 1918 and 1920, each tree representing one of 93 local men killed in World War I.

A similar larger tree in the family *Malvaceae* is *Adansonia gregorii*, commonly known as the baobab. As with other baobabs, it is easily recognised by the swollen base of its trunk, which forms a massive caudex, giving the tree a bottle-like appearance.

Family: *Malvaceae*

Genus: *Brachychiton*

Botanic name: *Brachychiton rupestris*
described by Sir Thomas Mitchell and John Lindley in 1848

Also known as: Narrow-leaved Bottle Tree or Queensland Bottle Tree
So called because of its bulbous trunk

Origin: Australia. Native to central Queensland from latitude 22° S to 28° S

Habitat: It grows on the tops and slopes of hills or ridges in low hilly country, in clay, shale, or basalt soils. It is a key component and emergent tree in the endangered central semi-evergreen vine thickets — also known as bottle tree scrub — of the Queensland Brigalow Belt. This bottle tree scrub is a key habitat of the near threatened black-breasted button-quail.

Description: It is a drought-deciduous succulent tree which can be up to 3.5 metres in diameter at breast height, reaching 10–25 metres high. The Queensland Bottle Tree is deciduous, losing its leaves between September and December. The leaves are simple or divided, with one or more narrow leaf blades up to 11 centimetres (4 in) long and 2 centimetres (0.8 in) wide.



The timing, duration and extent of leaf drop may be affected by extremes of rainfall or drought.

Propagation and cultivation: Cream-coloured flowers appear from September to November, and are followed by woody boat-shaped follicles carrying 4 to 8 sometimes up to 12 seeds that ripen from November to May.

Like all *Brachychiton* species, *B. rupestris* is monoecious — each plant has distinct male and female flowers.



Male flowers have 15 stamens, with pale yellow anthers, while female flowers have cream or white stigmas surrounded by rudimentary stellate (star-shaped) carpels, which sit atop the ovaries.



Bottle trees grown from seed may take up to 20 years to flower. Flowering takes place after adult leaves have appeared.

The Bottle Tree is very slow-growing, and the formation of the unique bottle shape is not visible until the tree is about 5 to 8 years old. *Brachychiton rupestris* can withstand bushfires and responds by flowering and putting forth new foliage afterwards.

Sources:
Urban Forest Ecosystems Institute, California Polytechnic State University.
Australian Native Plants Society (Australia).
<https://en.wikipedia.org/>