

Plant of the Month - January

by Allan Carr

Corymbia tessellaris

Moreton Bay ash

Pronunciation: cor-RIM-bee-a tess-el-AR-ris

MYRTACEAE

Derivation: *Corymbia*, from the Latin, *corymbium* – a corymb (referring to the flower arrangement in some species of this genus); *tessellaris*, from the Latin, *tessella* – tessellated or a cube of mosaic stone (referring to the tessellated basal bark).



Bark showing tessellations



Buds, flowers, gum nuts



Habit in Caboolture car park

Corymbia is the genus name given to 113 species of Eucalypts, by Hill and Johnson in 1995 and all occur naturally in Australia, a few in Papua New Guinea as well.

Description: *C. tessellaris* is a tree to 30 m with a tall straight trunk in open forests on a range of soil types but mainly sandy soils from Cape York, over most of eastern Qld and central northern NSW. Bark is grey with tile-like tessellations for 1 or 2 metres from the ground changing to smooth white to grey above, commonly referred to as one of the 'half-barks'.

Leaves to 250 mm x 25 mm are alternate, long and narrow, dull greyish green on both surfaces and pendulous, drooping almost vertically.

Flowers are borne in 2 to 7 flowered *umbels in slender *panicles in the leaf axils from October to February. The buds have low dome-shaped *operculums and the flowers are creamy white to 15 mm across.

Fruits of cylindrical to urn shape are thin-walled and finely-ridged. These woody gum nuts to 12 mm x 8 mm are shed before the next flowering and contain tiny red-brown seeds.

*umbel = an inflorescence in which all the flower stalks of about the same length arise in a cluster

*panicle = a much-branched flower spike with the youngest flowers at the top

*operculum = a lid or cap covering the rest of the flower parts



Flowers, leaves