

## **Eucalyptus bancroftii (Tumbledown Gum)**

The common name Tumbledown Gum is an apt description of the twisted, crooked appearance of this small tree. The leathery leaves are concolorous, the same dull blue-green colour on both sides, and form a wide crown. It occurs on coastal plains and low hills from Port Macquarie to Woodgate, invariably found growing in poorly drained soils in association with wet heath or wallum plant communities.



An alternative common name for the tree, Bancroft's Red Gum, indicates it belongs to the Red Gum group of Eucalypts, section *Exsertaria* of subgenus *Symphyomyrtus* (Pryor and Johnson, 1971). Closely related local species include Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), Mt. Beerwah Red Gum (*Eucalyptus kabiana*) and Queensland Peppermint (*Eucalyptus exserta*), the latter being notable for having fibrous, not smooth (gum) bark.

The bark of *E. bancroftii* is shed annually in large pieces but not all at the same time. Differing exposure to weathering causes mosaic patterns of colour to develop on the trunk. This is a feature most Red Gums have in common but Tumbledown Gum is considered to be the most striking example.



Another feature of Red Gums is the long opercula (flower bud caps) which, in the case of Bancroft's Red Gum, drop off in summer to expose the large white flowers.



The woody fruit or gum nuts that follow have characteristic exert (projecting) valves, prominent after the seed has been released.



These distinctive qualities – small size, interesting habit, attractive bark – make the tree a suitable subject for garden or street planting and a prime candidate for bonsai. The pot plant in the photo below is about ten years old and less than a metre tall.

