

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Eucalyptus obliqua L'Héritier

Common Names

brown-top stringybark, messmate, messmate stringybark

Origin

Australia: South Australia through southern Victoria, Tasmania and eastern New South Wales, to south-eastern Queensland.

Cultivation

In New Zealand cultivated as a landscape tree of parks and tree collections, and for timber; occasionally naturalised from nearby planted specimens.

Distribution

Scattered records throughout New Zealand.

Distinguishing Features

- A tree to 90 m tall, or sometimes a multi-stemmed shrub, with bark rough to small branches, or sometimes smooth on smaller, upper branches; rough bark stringy or fibrous, brown to grey-brown, longitudinally furrowed; smooth bark green or grey. Young stems rounded square in cross-section, warty or smooth.
- Adult leaves that are glossy, green, same colour above and below, alternate, stalked, blade lanceolate to sickle-shaped, to 220 mm long and 70 mm wide, usually the two sides of the leaf base meet at different points on the midrib (oblique), side-veins at an acute angle to midrib.
- Juvenile leaves that are glossy, green, initially almost stalkless and opposite for 2–7 nodes, then alternate, stalked, hanging downwards, broadly ovate to lanceolate or sickle-shaped, to 210 mm long and 85 mm wide, base initially lobed to rounded, but by about node 7 the bases meet at different points on the midrib (oblique).
- Flowers in stalked clusters of 11 to 15 or more, in leaf axils, stalk of cluster angular, buds stalked, bud stalks to 8 mm long. Mature buds club-shaped, sometimes broadly, to 9 mm long and 5 mm wide, green to yellow, usually smooth, bud cap conical to rounded, flowers white.
- Fruit are stalked woody capsules, stalk to 5 mm long, cup-shaped or barrel-shaped, to 12 mm long and 11 mm wide, disc usually descending inside the rim, valves 3 or 4, near rim level or enclosed within the capsule.

Habit

Tree to 90 m tall, or sometimes a multi-stemmed shrub.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark rough to small branches, or sometimes smooth on branches <80 mm diameter; rough bark stringy or fibrous, brown to grey-brown, longitudinally furrowed; smooth bark green or grey; ribbons absent. Hairs and adventitious roots absent. Young stems rounded square in cross-section, warty or smooth.

Leaves

Adult leaves alternate, stalked, blade lanceolate to sickle-shaped, 60–220 mm long, 15–70 mm wide, usually the two sides of the leaf base meeting at different points on the midrib (oblique), same colour above and below, glossy, green, side-veins at an acute angle to midrib, vein reticulation sparse to moderate, intramarginal vein parallel to and well removed from margin, oil glands usually inconspicuous; leaf stalk 7–34 mm long.

Juvenile leaves glossy, green, initially almost stalkless and opposite for 2–7 nodes, then alternate, stalked, hanging downwards, broadly ovate to lanceolate or sickle-shaped, 60–210 mm long, 23–85 mm wide, base initially lobed to rounded, but by about node 7 the bases are oblique.

Flowers

Flowers in stalked clusters of 11 to 15 or more, in leaf axils, stalk of cluster angular, 4–25(–31) mm long, buds stalked, bud stalks (1–)3–8 mm long. Mature buds free, club-shaped, sometimes broadly, 4–9 mm long, 3–5 mm wide, green to yellow, usually smooth, bud cap conical to rounded, flowers (stamens) white; in mature open flowers, petals and sepals absent. Main flowering period: summer and autumn, but some flowering may occur from spring through to early winter.

Fruit

Capsules woody, stalked (stalks 1–5 mm long), cup-shaped or barrel-shaped, 6–12 mm long, 5–11 mm wide, disc usually descending inside the rim, valves 3 or 4, near rim level or enclosed within the capsule.

Similar Species

- *Eucalyptus obliqua* belongs in the green-leaved ash eucalypt group and is notable for the large, glossy, green, stalked, ovate, juvenile leaves that hang downwards and in which the two sides of the leaf base meet at different points on the midrib (oblique). It

is never waxy grey-white. *Eucalyptus obliqua* is distinguished from the other tall green-leaved ash species of similar wet forests by not having smooth upper trunk or ribbons in the crown of the tree.

- The other common tall green-leaved ash species, *E. fastigata* and *E. regnans*, often have paired bud and capsule clusters in leaf axils, whereas *E. obliqua* has larger, single, cup-shaped or barrel-shaped capsules.
- *Eucalyptus obliqua* has some characteristics in common with the stringybarks, as well as some other ash eucalypt species and *E. pilularis*. Stringybark species in this key are *E. globoidea*, *E. eugenioides* and *E. muelleriana*. Other stringybarks in New Zealand include *E. agglomerata* (blue-leaved stringybark) and *E. laevopinea* (silvertop stringybark).
- *Eucalyptus obliqua* has mostly rough bark, but smooth bark on the upper branches. *Eucalyptus pilularis* has rough bark on the lower trunk, but smooth white bark on the upper trunk and branches. Stringybarks have fibrous rough bark to the small branches (except *E. laevopinea*, that has smooth white bark on the small limbs).
- *Eucalyptus obliqua* and *E. pilularis* have more or less lanceolate adult leaves that are the same colour above and below. Of the stringybarks, *E. agglomerata* and *E. laevopinea* also have leaves the same colour above and below. Other stringybarks have leaves distinctly different coloured above and below, or mostly the same colour but colour may be slightly different.
- *Eucalyptus obliqua* has warty young stems from numerous raised oil glands. *Eucalyptus pilularis* has young stems 4-sided with flanged edges. Stringybark juvenile stems are rough-surfaced from the presence of star-shaped hairs. *Eucalyptus obliqua* and *E. pilularis* juvenile leaves are stalkless whereas stringybark juvenile leaves have short stalks.
- *Eucalyptus obliqua* is similar to stringybarks in having between 7 and 15 flowers and capsules in a cluster. *Eucalyptus globoidea*, *E. obliqua* (and *E. agglomerata*) have 11–15; *E. pilularis* and *E. eugenioides* have 7–15; *E. muelleriana* (and *E. laevopinea*) have 7–11. All these stringybarks and *E. obliqua* have the cluster stalk angular to flattened, some up to 2 cm long; *E. pilularis* has an angular cluster stalk.
- *Eucalyptus obliqua* and most stringybarks have rounded to conical bud caps. The bud cap of *E. pilularis* (and *E. agglomerata*) is conical and may be narrowly pointed.
- *Eucalyptus obliqua*, *E. muelleriana*, *E. laevopinea* and *E. pilularis* can have capsules similar in size, but *E. obliqua* has cup-shaped to barrel-shaped capsules. *Eucalyptus pilularis* capsules are round to truncated-globular, as are capsules of many stringybarks. Capsules of *E. globoidea*, *E. eugenioides* and *E. agglomerata* are usually smaller and more crowded.

Notes

Eucalyptus is a genus of nearly 800 species, most of which are endemic to Australia, with a few species extending to parts of Malesia and as far north as the Philippines.

External Links

- [EUCLID](#)
- [Flora of Australia](#)
- [Flora of New Zealand Online](#)
- [GBIF](#)
- [iNaturalist NZ](#)
- [NZPCN](#)
- [PlantNET: New South Wales Flora Online](#)
- [Plants of South Eastern New South Wales](#)
- [VicFlora: Flora of Victoria](#)

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