

Grey Box

Eucalyptus microcarpa

NAMING: Greek *micro* means small; *carpos* means fruit. The common name “box” comes from the early European settlers because the timber reminded them of the hard interlocking timber of the European box trees (*Buxus sempervirens*).

DISTRIBUTION: *Eucalyptus microcarpa* is the iconic tree of the Adelaide plains Grassy Grey Box Woodland being found in the Mount Lofty Ranges and Heywood Park near Adelaide CBD. It also occurs naturally in QLD, NSW and Victoria.

HABITAT: It is typically associated with grassy woodland and loamy soils.

DESCRIPTION: The Grey Box tree is easily identified by its bark. They are long-lived, single-stemmed spreading eucalypts growing from 8-25m high. Notice the grey fibrous rough bark on the trunk and larger branches. The upper branches, however are smooth and shed bark in strips.



Juvenile growth (coppice or field seedlings to 50 cm) have rounded stems with the first few pairs of juvenile **leaves** starting opposite each other and then growing in alternate steps opposite each other. Look at the mature leaves. They are thick and broad up to 120mm long, they have a grey green colour and the new growth has a fresh olive green look.



Tight clusters of 4-7 barrel-shaped buds develop on the new growth. During December the diamond shaped buds mature reaching 8-12mm in length. It produces white **flowers** from late summer to early winter.

ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE: The flowers of the grey box gum are a food source for gliders and possums as well as nectar eating birds such as rainbow lorikeets. Bees also love the nectar and the plentiful pollen from the clusters of white flowers.