

# River Red Gum

## *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*

**NAMING:** Curiously, the name *camaldulensis* comes from the Naples Camalduli Monastery where a specimen grown from seed in their private garden was given the name *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* in 1832 by their Chief Gardener . No one knows how the seed got to be there!

**DISTRIBUTION:** *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* is the most widely spread of the *Eucalyptus* in Australia.

**HABITAT:** It grows along rivers and floodplains.

**DESCRIPTION:** The River Red Gum is a long-lived (up to 1000years), single-stemmed eucalypt (8-42m high) with smooth greyish-cream bark with patches of colours ranging from creams to orange and red. There is often a fibrous grey skirt at the base. They are very deep-rooted and heavy water users often lowering the water table. If water becomes really limiting, they simply wilt and drop up to 2/3rd of their leaves until water returns.



River red gums have rather small clumps of gumnuts that develop into creamy-white **flowers**.

The lance-shaped or curved adult **leaves** produce a water-soluble chemical that is washed from its leaves by rain. These chemicals inhibit the growth of other plants, including river red gum seedlings, under the canopy. This phenomenon is called allelopathy, and along with the dense canopy, inhibits plant growth under the trees. These chemicals are washed out by flood water allowing germination of seedlings. This wonderful mechanism ensures **seeds** do not germinate when conditions are dry and where they would compete with the parent tree. Germination then occurs when there is plenty of water. Their **wood**, when freshly exposed, is a bright red, almost blood-coloured. This is due to natural antibiotic chemicals that when combined with air, provide both resistance to water and protect the trees against termites and diseases.

**TRADITIONAL USE:** River Red Gums have been used by Indigenous people for medicines, canoes, bowls, shields, and other utensils. ( a scar left from cutting the bark away to make a canoe)

**OTHER USES:** The durable and water-resistant wood makes it ideal for railway sleepers, fence posts, and piers and wharfs. They have been widely planted overseas and in some countries pose a serious weed problem.

**INTERESTING FACTS:** The River Red and Blue gums look very similar. However, their flowers and gumnuts differ – Red gums have creamy-white flowers, SA Blue gums can have red, pink or cream flowers. Red gums have rather small clumps of gumnuts and SA Blue gums have larger gumnuts