

# *Cochlospermum gillivraei* Benth.

Family:  
Bixaceae

Bentham, G. (1863), *Flora Australiensis* 1: 106, Lectotype: "Queensland, Cook, Lizard Island, off the northeast coast, McGillivray (K, lectotype)"

Common name:  
Kapok Tree; Gillivray's Kapok Tree; Native Kapok; Kapok Bush; Buttercup Tree

## Stem

Usually a small, short-boled tree. Deciduous; leafless for a period between July and October. Oak type grain visible in the inner blaze.

## Leaves

Leaves very deeply lobed, the lobes radiating like the blades of a windmill. Leaf blades about 5-15 x 7-18 cm. Twig bark strong and fibrous when stripped. Large pores in the twig pith visible with a lens and to the naked eye. Stipules narrow, about 0.2-0.4 cm long, tapering to a point.

## Flowers

Flowers about 7-10 cm diam., usually produced when the tree is leafless. Petals marked by pink-red spots and stripes on the inner surface. Staminal filaments red.

## Fruit

Capsules large, about 6-9.5 x 3.5-6 cm, somewhat inflated, disintegrating at maturity. Two layers visible in the testa, the outer layer thin and easily removed. Hairs on the testa shed easily so that the seeds appear glabrous. Micropyle closed by a movable valve inside the testa.

## Seedlings

Cotyledons elliptic to ovate-elliptic, about 20-25 x 8-12 mm. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade 5-lobed with one major vein to each lobe; stipules small, fleshy. Seed germination time 14 to 46 days.

## Distribution and Ecology

Widespread in NT, CYP, NEQ and CEQ. Altitudinal range from sea level to 100 m. Usually grows in rocky situations in open forest but also found in monsoon forest and on rain forest margins. Also occurs in New Guinea.

## Natural History & Notes

This tree flowers in the dry season when it is leafless. It adds a considerable amount of colour to an environment which is often bereft of colour or green leaves.

Bark material of this species was active against some tumors. Collins et al. (1990).

Aboriginal usage: In the wet season, when excavation is easier, Aboriginal people dig up the roots of small plants of this species. They are baked in ashes and hammered to soften them before being consumed. Kenneally et al. (1995).

## Synonyms

*Cochlospermum gillivraei* Benth. **subsp. gillivraei**, *Botanische Jahrbucher* 101 : 237(1980).  
*Maximilanea gillivraei* (Benth.) Kuntze, *Revis. Gen. Pl.* 1: 44(1891).

RFK Code

504



Flowers. © B. Gray



Fruit. © CSIRO



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



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