

Gyrocarpus americanus Jacq.

Family:

Hernandiaceae

Jacquin, N.J. von (1763) *Selectarum Stirpium Americanarum Historia* : 282. Type: Colombia, Cartagena, N. Jacquin. Holo: BM. Fide Kubitzki (1969).

Common name:

Coolamon Tree; Gyro Damson; Helicopter Tree; Shitwood; Twirly Whirly Tree

Stem

Deciduous; leafless for quite long periods between June and October. Bark rather shiny brown. Blaze odour noticeable but difficult to describe.

Leaves

Width of the leaf blades approximating or exceeding the length. Leaf blades about 7-24 x 4-21 cm. Petioles about 4-19.5 cm long. Hairs normally visible with a lens on the upper surface.

Flowers

Most flowers male with only occasional hermaphrodite flowers. Male flowers: Flowers very small, about 2-3 mm diam. Tepals triangular, small, about 0.75-1 mm long. Perianth tube about 1 mm long. Anther filaments very hairy, about 1-1.25 mm long, anthers about 1 mm long. Hermaphrodite flowers: Style + stigma about 2 mm long. Style sigmoid. Stigma capitate.

Fruit

Fruits usually 2-winged, each wing +/- spatulate, about 50-70 x 9-14 mm. Cotyledons much folded. Endosperm scanty.

Seedlings

Cotyledons papilionate, about 20-35 x 40-50 mm, hairy on the upper surface, 3-5 veined. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade triangular or cordate, usually with one large lobe or tooth each side of the midrib, hairy on the upper surface, densely hairy on the undersurface; petiole hairy; taproot and stem swollen, carrot-like (*Daucus carota*). Seed germination time 3 to 232 days.

Distribution and Ecology

Occurs in WA, NT, CYP, NEQ, CEQ and southwards to coastal central Queensland. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 900 m. Grows in monsoon forest, dry scrub and open forest. Pantropic, also occurs in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Central America.

Natural History & Notes

Three subspecies occur in the region, see Flora of Australia Vol. 2.

This species may have medicinal properties. This plant used medicinally by Aborigines. Cribb (1981).

Synonyms

Gyrocarpus americanus* Jacq. subsp. *americanus, *Botanische Jahrbucher* 89: 183(1969).

***Gyrocarpus americanus* subsp. *sphenopterus* (R.Br.) Kubitzki**, *Botanische Jahrbucher* 89 : 185(1969), Type: Queensland, Carpenraria region, R. Brown 4468. Holo: BM. Iso: E, NY, P. Fide Kubitzki (1969). ***Gyrocarpus sphenopterus* R.Br.**, *Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae* : 405(1810), Type: Northern Territory, Arnhem Bay, R.Brown 4468. Holo: Bm. Iso: E, NY.

***Gyrocarpus acuminatus* Meisn.**, *Prodromus* 15(1): 248(1864), Type: Ad Port Denison, Novae Holl. (Ferd. Mueller!). Holo: G-DC. Iso: NY. Fide Kubitzki (1969). ***Gyrocarpus jacquinii* Gaertn.**, *De Fructibus et Seminibus Plantarum* 2: 92(1791), Type: E collectione sem. Banksiana.

***Gyrocarpus americanus* subsp. *pachyphyllus* Kubitzki**, *Botanische Jahrbucher* 89 : 185(1969), Type: Australien. W.-Australien. Broome: HOCHREUTINER 2831 (G; L, Typus ..). ***Gyrocarpus rugosus* R.Br.**, *Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae* : 405(1810), Type: Northern Territory, Arnhem Bay, R.Brown 4468. Holo: Bm. Iso: E, NY. Fide Kubitzki (1969). ***Gyrocarpus asiaticus* Willd.**, *Species Plantarum* 4(2) : 982(1806), Type: Habitat in India orientali.

RFK Code



Flowers and juvenile leaves. © CSIRO



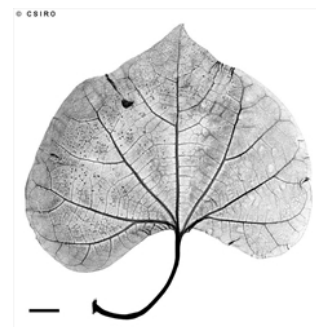
Male flowers. © CSIRO



Flowers. © Mick Godwin



Leaves and fruit. © G. Sankowsky



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Trunk. © G. Sankowsky

