

# Yellow Top Mallee Ash

## *Eucalyptus luehmanniana*



There is a popular misconception that Mallee Eucalypts grow only in semi-arid areas of southern Australia, from south-western NSW and north-western Victoria to South Australia and in the south-western corner of Western Australia. This is definitely NOT the case and, as well as outliers elsewhere in Australia, there are several mallees that grow in the Sydney region. For the most part, they grow in similar environmental conditions to their western counterparts, on nutrient poor soils, with little in the way of water resources and relatively high fire frequency. Around Sydney, they can be found on the edges of cliffs and plateaus and in windswept locations, along the coast and in the mountains. For all that, the growth habit remains the same, characteristically with multiple stems arising from a woody, underground lignotuber; although given better environmental conditions, some species may grow as small trees with individual trunks.

Mallee eucalypts in heathland on a sandstone plateau in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park





*Eucalyptus luehmanniana*, the Yellow Top Mallee Ash, is one of the most beautiful of all mallees and has a limited distribution to coastal sandstone plateaus, north and south of Sydney, mostly amongst rocks on poorly drained, skeletal, sandy soils. Northern populations have grey green leaves which contrast with bright yellow young stems

and buds (hence the name, 'Yellow Top'); older stems are white, often with long ribbons of bark and occasionally scribbles. After fire, mallees resprout from their lignotubers, producing numerous stems which flower within 2-4 years and fruit within 5-6 years of the last fire<sup>1</sup>. Most eucalypts (gum trees) grow too tall for average suburban gardens, but with a maximum height of about 5 metres, the Yellow Top Mallee Ash is an excellent choice for garden planting.

The Yellow Top Mallee Ash has played an important role in our history; its fruits (gumnuts) feature with Sir Joseph Banks on the first Australian \$5.00 note.



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Map: modified from *Encyclopedia of Life*: <http://eol.org/pages/630212/maps>

<sup>1</sup> Davies, SJ & Myerscough, PJ 1991 Postfire demography of the wet-mallee *Eucalyptus luehmanniana* F.Muell. (Myrtaceae) *Australian Journal of Botany* 39(5):459-466.

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