

*Pittosporum angustifolium* Weeping Pittosporum

***Pittosporum angustifolium***: Left: Male flower, Photo Reiner Richter, inaturalist.org CC BY-NC-SA. Right: Female flower, Photo Neil Blair, vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

### Overview

The plant, previously named *Pittosporum phylliraeoides*, was re-classified (please see history below for detail) and now known as *Pittosporum angustifolium*. It is commonly known as 'Weeping Pittosporum'. First Nations people know it as the Gumby Gumby tree. It is also known as native apricot, poisonberry and mee mee.

This species belongs to the family of "Pittosporaceae", genus "*Pittosporum*". It is native to Australia and found in most states other than Tasmania and the Northern Territory. It is common in north-western Victoria in the heavier soils. It is frost resistant and drought tolerant. It tolerates loamy, clay and sandy soils.

### History

Over time there has been some taxonomic confusion relating to the *Pittosporum angustifolium* species. In 1832, William and George Loddiges published a description about *Pittosporum angustifolium* in the book Loddiges' The Botanical Cabinet. George Bentham combined this species with *Pittosporum ligustrifolium* and *Pittosporum phillyreoides* (Wikipedia, *Pittosporum Angustifolium*). In the 2000 revision of this book, these three were re-split (Wikipedia). Loddiges classification is debateable as they highlight that this tree only has 'a few slender straggling branches' and can be considered as an authentic feature (United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2023). In 2001, these species were reclassified by ARS Systematic Botanists, resulting in *Pittosporum phillyreoides* being synonymous with *Pittosporum angustifolium* (USDA, 2023).

### Description VicFlora (2023).

*Pittosporum angustifolium* is a slender tree which can grow up to 10 metres high. The leaves are linear between 5-12 cm long and 2-10 mm wide.

It grows in a wide range of semi-arid to arid areas in woodland and in some instances in shrubland; growing moderately fast where there is maximum sunshine. It tolerates frost and is drought tolerant once established (Elliot & Jones, (1997) 'Encyclopedia of Australian Plants suitable for cultivation, Vol 7, p.336)

The flowers are unisexual, although sometimes it is possibly bisexual. It has a sweet, scented whitish



***Pittosporum angustifolium* in the GBG:** Left: Tree. Photo Helen Zournazis.

Right, above: Narrow weeping leaves. Photo DJ. Right, below: Trunk with rough bark. Photo: DJ.

flower which become yellow as they age (Cayzer). This tree flowers between winter and spring with the mature fruit persisting over several seasons. The seed is dispersed by the birds.

### Uses

First nations people use all parts of the tree for bush tucker and bush medicine. They use seeds, fruit pulp and leaves as an infusion for relief of cramps and pain. They are also used for the treatment of colds and inducing lactation.

The seeds have a bitter taste; however, they are edible and are ground into flour for food. The fruit from the tree is commonly known as 'native apricot' which is not edible.

The wood is hard, light coloured and closely grained and used for wood turning (Cayzer).

### Flowers

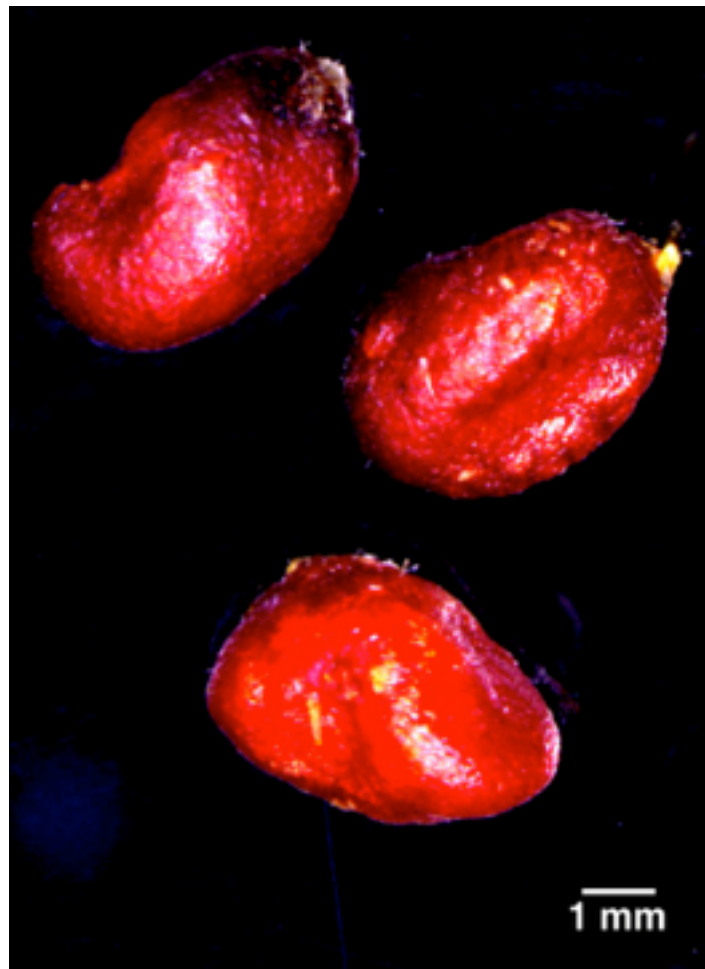
This tree has pendulous cream flowers attracting birds and butterflies. The seeds are bright red and sticky (Territory Native plants, 2023)

### Research

Currently, Central Queensland University is undertaking a new research initiative in consultation with Uncle Steve Kemp, Ghungalu Aboriginal Elder to explore the traditional medicinal properties of the Gumby Gumby tree through "modern western analytical chemistry and biassay models" (Central Queensland University, 2022). Uncle Steve Kemp, is sharing his knowledge from his Great Uncle in the traditional medicines made from this tree (Hines, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, ABC & Central Queensland University, 2022).

First nations people have used this tree in treating some cancers, however, this has not yet been scientifically proven as effective? (Inaturalist, Native Apricot (*Pittosporum angustifolium*) – website: <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/taxa/349255-Pittosporum-angustifolium> (accessed on: 21 May. 2023).





***Pittosporum angustifolium*:**

Left: Hanging ripe fruit. Photo: Annabel Carle vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Right: Seeds (enlarged). Photo: Robert Hare vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

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References (continued): Wikipedia, *Pittosporum angustifolium*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittosporum\\_angustifolium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittosporum_angustifolium) accessed on 30 May 2023



***Pittosporum angustifolium***: Above left: Unripe fruit. Photo: [davidando inaturalist.org](#) CC BY-NC.  
 Other two photos: Although the fruit appears to have flesh and is named "Apricot", it is a hard nut. As it matures and dries, it splits to reveal sticky seeds. Above right: Photo [Caroline Telfer, inaturalist.org](#) CC BY-NC.  
 Below: Photo [davidando inaturalist.org](#) CC BY-NC.







M. Flockton, del. et lith.

THE NARROW-LEAVED PITTOSPORUM.

(*Pittosporum angustifolium*, DC.)

Botanical illustration *Pittosporum angustifolium*.

Main: Flowering twig; A: Flower; B: Vertical section through flower; C: Stamen; D: Pistil (a) Stigma, (b) Style, (c) Ovary, (d) Sepals; E: Seed pod enclosing the seeds.

**Drawing:** Lilian Margaret Flockton (1861-1953), Plate 4, Forest Flora of New South Wales, Joseph Henry Maiden (1859-1925). Wikimedia Commons, Public domain.