



Home > Gardens | CANBR > Botanical Information > Growing Native Plants > Leptospermum

Leptospermum - family Myrtaceae

Commonly known as 'teatrees'

Commonly referred to as Teatree, *Leptospermum* is distributed in Australia, South East Asia (i.e. the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Philippines, Sulawesi, Thailand, Flores, Moluccas, southern Burma and New Guinea) and New Zealand. Whilst *Leptospermum* occupies a variety of habitats from coastal dunes to high mountain peaks, it is most commonly found in wet or periodically wet substrates that are acidic and low in nutrient content.

Leptospermum is in the sub-family Leptospermoideae of family Myrtaceae and currently comprises 86 recognized species. About 83 species occur in Australia, all but two endemic. The genus *Leptospermum* was first recognized by Johann Reinhold Forster and his son Johann Georg Adam Forster when they published the name *L. scoparium* Forst. & G.Forst. in 1776.



George Bentham was the first to treat the genus in his 1866 *Flora Australiensis*. Bentham recognized 20 species and his comments that the "... species are very difficult to distinguish" and that from "the dried specimens, whether of the species here admitted or of the varieties or races, I have been unable to discover any positive discriminating characters" are evidence of the problematic nature of the genus. Doubtless, some of these difficulties would have arisen from Bentham's broad concept of *Leptospermum*, which included species now assigned to *Homalospermum* Schauer, *Neofabricia* J.Thompson and *Pericalymma* (Endl.) Endl. In 1983 Thompson reinstated the genera *Homalospermum* and *Pericalymma*, described *Neofabricia* (based in part upon the genus *Fabricia* Gaertner) and then in 1989 published a revision of the genus *Leptospermum*. Thompson recognized 79 species with 27 of these being described as new. In 1992 Bean described another two species and clarified taxonomic problems associated with two northern Australian and Malesian taxa. In 1993 Lyne and in 1996 Lyne and Crisp published descriptions of another two new species.

The common name tea-tree derives from the practice of early settlers of soaking the leaves of several species in boiling water to make a tea substitute. Most *Leptospermum* species make desirable garden plants. Flowers are mostly large, up to 3 cm in diameter, and they are hardy in most soils and aspects.

They are easy to propagate from seed or cuttings. Several cultivars have been established in the trade for many years. These have originated mainly from *L. scoparium*, a species that Australia shares with New Zealand. Most of the cultivars have developed from New Zealand stock and have occurred as chance seedlings in nurseries of other countries; that is, the United States, Ireland and the United Kingdom. With concentrated breeding effort, Australian species will produce hybrids far superior to these in terms of vigour and disease resistance. As is well known, most of the *L. scoparium* cultivars are prone to scale and the associated black smut. Many *Leptospermum* species make useful screen plants as most have a tight, compact growth. Species that flower on the new wood may be used as cut flowers.

Text used below in this web-site is by John Wrigley from the the book **Australian Native Plants, 4th edition**, by John Wrigley and Murray Fagg, published by Reed Books, November 1996.

Commonly grown *Leptospermum* species

- [Leptospermum amboinense](#)
- [Leptospermum arachnoides](#)
- [Leptospermum brachyandrum](#)
- [Leptospermum brevipes](#)
- [Leptospermum continentale](#)
- [Leptospermum coriaceum](#)
- [Leptospermum deuense](#)
- [Leptospermum epacridoideum](#)
- [Leptospermum 'Horizontalis'](#)
- [Leptospermum juniperinum](#)
- [Leptospermum laevigatum](#)
- [Leptospermum lanigerum](#)
- [Leptospermum liversidgei](#)

[Leptospermum luehmannii](#)
[Leptospermum macrocarpum](#)
[Leptospermum madidum subsp. sativum](#)
[Leptospermum minutifolium](#)
[Leptospermum multicaule](#)
[Leptospermum myrsinoides](#)
[Leptospermum nitidum](#)
[Leptospermum obovatum](#)
[Leptospermum oligandrum](#)
[Leptospermum parvifolium](#)
[Leptospermum petersonii](#)
[Leptospermum 'Pink Cascade'](#)
[Leptospermum polygalifolium](#)
[Leptospermum polygalifolium 'Pacific Beauty'](#)
[Leptospermum purpurascens](#)
[Leptospermum rotundifolium](#)
[Leptospermum rotundifolium 'Julie Ann'](#)
[Leptospermum scoparium](#)
[Leptospermum sericeum](#)
[Leptospermum speciosum](#)
[Leptospermum spectabile](#)
[Leptospermum spinescens](#)
[Leptospermum squarrosum](#)
[Leptospermum trinervium](#)
[Leptospermum turbinatum](#)
[Leptospermum variabile](#)
[Leptospermum wooroonooran](#)

[^ top](#)

PLANT DATABASES	PLANT PHOTOGRAPHS	GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS	PLANT GROUPS	CULTURAL HISTORY	BOTANICAL ART	ACT (CANBERRA) REGION
Plant Name Index (APNI)	Digital Images	Growing Native Plants	Eucalypts	Aboriginal Plant Use	Gallery	Census of ACT Plants
Australian Plant Census (APC)	All photo records	Banksias (Banksia)	Orchids	Floral Emblems	Artists	Plants of Black Mtn
Cultivar Names	Photos by Family	Wattle (Acacia)	Mistletoes	Botanic Gardens	Poison Plants	Botanical Resource Centre
Registered Cultivars	Photos by Genus	Waratahs (Telopea)	Ferns	Horticultural History	Proteaceae	Public Reference Herbarium
Common Names	Non-plant Photos	Bottlebrushes (Callistemon)	Cryptogams	Botanical Postage Stamps	Myrtaceae	
Virtual Herbarium (AVH)	Conditions & Fees	Kangaroo Paws (Anigozanthos)	Bryophytes	Christmas Flowers	Acacia	
Living Plants ANBG	About Plant Image Index	Ferns	Lichens	Music	Woolcock's Paintings	
	About ANBG's Photos	Cultivars	Fungi		Waratah Art	
	ANBG on Flickr	Nurseries and Seeds				
IDENTIFICATION AIDS					PEOPLE & PLANTS	HOME
CD Interactive Keys					Collectors & Illustrators	CANBR HOME
Plants of Black Mtn Herbarium Specimen					Explorers	HERBARIUM HOME
					Biographies	GARDENS HOME