

# Flora of the Darwin Region

## VOLUME 1

P.S. Short & I.D. Cowie (eds)



RANUNCULACEAE

P.S. Short

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Cowie, I.D., Northern Territory Department  
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Editors: P.S. Short and I.D. Cowie  
Illustrations: M. Osterkamp  
Typesetting: D. Bisa and M. Voukalis  
Photographic Editor: B.M. Stuckey  
Authors contributing to this publication:  
D.E. Albrecht  
Northern Territory Herbarium, Department of  
Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and  
Sport, P.O. Box 1120, Alice Springs, N.T. 0871,  
Australia  
R.M. Barker  
State Herbarium of South Australia, Plant  
Biodiversity Centre, P.O. Box 2732, Kent Town,  
S.A. 5071, Australia  
I.D. Cowie; B. Crase\*; D.J. Dixon\*; C.R. Dunlop\*;  
R.K. Harwood\*; R.A. Kerrigan\*; G.J. Leach\*;  
C. Mangion\*; P.S. Short; G.M. Wightman\*  
Northern Territory Herbarium, Department of  
Natural Resources, Environment the Arts and

Sport, P.O. Box 496, Palmerston, N.T. 0831,  
Australia  
L.A. Craven  
Australian National Herbarium, Centre for  
Plant, Biodiversity Research, G.P.O. Box 1600,  
Canberra, A.C.T. 2601, Australia  
L.L. Forman† (deceased)  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond,  
Surrey, TW9 3AB, UK  
B. Jackes  
James Cook University Herbarium, School of  
Marine and Tropical Biology, James Cook  
University, Townsville, Qld 4811, Australia  
L. Jessup  
Queensland Herbarium Mt Coot-tha Road,  
Toowong, Qld 4066, Australia  
J. Palmer  
Australian National Herbarium, G.P.O. Box  
1600, Canberra, A.C.T. 2601, Australia

\*Former employee NT Herbarium

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# RANUNCULACEAE

*P.S. Short*

*Herbs*, shrubs or vines. *Leaves* petiolate, simple or variously compound or dissected, alternate or less commonly opposite; stipules usually absent. *Flowers* bisexual or unisexual, usually actinomorphic, the perianth segments cyclically or spirally arranged, solitary or in cymes or panicles. *Calyx* of 3–8 or more sepals; sepals often petaloid, sometimes caducous. *Petals* usually as many or fewer than sepals, sometimes absent (and perianth of tepals), free and usually with basal nectaries. *Stamens* many, free and usually spirally arranged; anthers tetrasporangiate and dithecal, dehiscing by longitudinal slits. *Gynoecium* usually of several to many, mostly distinct carpels forming a compound ovary, the individual carpels each with a distinct style. *Fruit* of follicles, achenes or sometimes berries. *Seeds* with an oily endosperm, the embryo usually small.

Cosmopolitan family with perhaps more than 3,000 species distributed among *c.* 60–70 genera. In Australia represented by ten genera, five of which are naturalised, and 74 species. In the N.T. only represented by *Clematis*.

Many, mainly extratropical, genera are widely cultivated as ornamentals, *e.g.* *Anemone*, *Aquilegia*, *Clematis*, *Delphinium* and toxic species in genera such as *Aconitum* (Monk's Hood) have medicinal uses.

Taxonomic references: Cronquist (1981); Tamura (1993); Stevenson (2004); Eichler *et al.* (2007).

## CLEMATIS L.

Climbing, perennial *vines* with woody stems or (not N.T.) herbs, usually dioecious. *Leaves* opposite, simple or ternate or pinnate, the leaflets with distinct petiolules; stipules absent. *Flowers* solitary or in an inflorescence, all flowers with 4 (–8) petaloid sepals (tepals), petals absent. *Male flowers* with numerous stamens, staminodes may be present. *Female flowers* with numerous carpels; carpels 1-ovulate; staminodes sometimes present. *Achenes* with an elongated, awn-like, plumose style. A genus of *c.* 300 species, with 11 native to Australia. Two species are in the N.T.; *C. pickeringii* is in the Top End and *C. decipiens* in southern N.T. (Mt Sonder, Mt Zeil and Chewings Range).

Taxonomic reference: Wheeler (1992).

### *C. pickeringii* A. Gray

Woody *climber*, dioecious or perhaps not consistently so, stems hairy. *Leaves* (2-) 3-foliolate or simple and palmately veined; simple leaves and leaflets ovate, 4–12.5 cm long, 2–8 cm wide, glabrous or with scattered, short, eglandular hairs, margins entire or evenly to irregularly toothed, bases symmetrical to markedly asymmetrical, apices acute to attenuate. *Flowers* in panicles to *c.* 20 cm long, the axes shortly hairy. *Sepals* (tepals) 4, in both male and female flowers narrowly elliptic or narrowly oblong, 4–12 mm long, white or cream, caducous. *Male flowers* with cream-coloured stamens 2.5–10 mm long. *Female flowers* with staminodes in an outer whorl. *Achenes* 4–5 mm long, their plumose, elongated styles (awns) to *c.* 80 mm long.

*Flowering & fruiting*: only recorded in Feb.

Fig. 1 (*Dunlop 6631; Makinson 1512; Mitchell 1446*); Pl. 1 (unvouchered).



Pl. 1 *Clematis pickeringii* (Photo: C. Mangion)

Indonesia to northern Australia (W.A., N.T., Qld, N.S.W.), New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji. An uncommon, or at least poorly collected, species found in monsoon rainforest in northern N.T.

Localities include Wagait Reserve, Bathurst and Melville islands, Gunn Point and Angularli Creek. There are few fertile specimens of this species in DNA and the male inflorescence illustrated in

Fig. 1 is from a Queensland specimen (*Makinson 1512*). The description is partly based on this specimen and the description by Wheeler (1992).

*Clematis pickeringii*

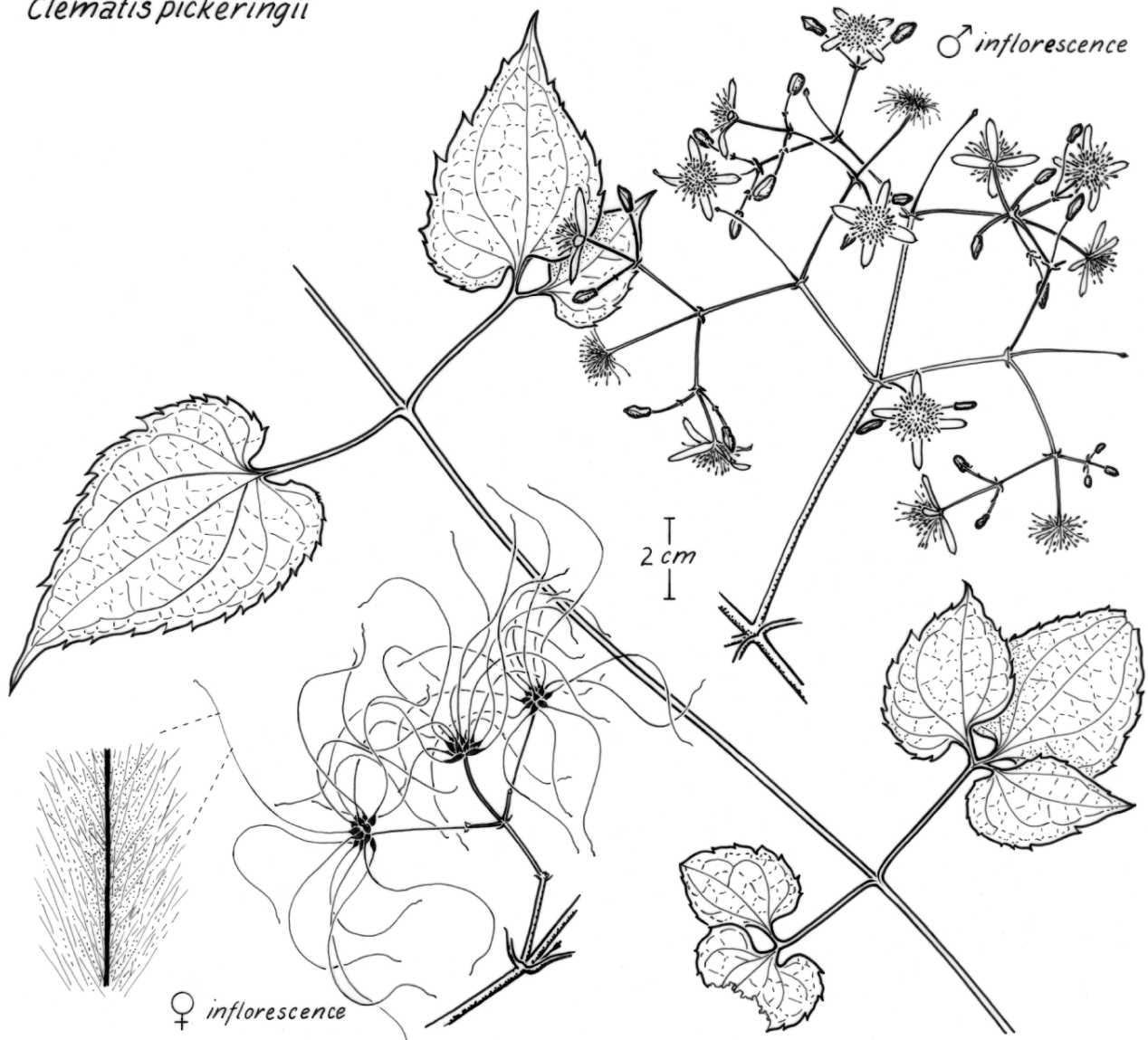


Fig. 1

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