

MELASTOMATACEAE

Shrubs or small trees, evergreen. Leaves simple, entire, usually opposite. Inflorescences cymose, often reduced. Flowers actinomorphic, bisexual, 4-5-merous. Hypanthium well developed. Sepals and petals free on hypanthium; petals often showy. Stamens usually twice the number of petals, uni- or dimorphic; anthers with terminal pores or slits, often with apical or basal appendages. Ovary usually inferior, 1-5-locular; ovules few to numerous, placentation various; style and stigma simple. Fruit a capsule or berry. Seeds 1-numerous.

A pantropical family of c. 250 genera and over 4500 species. Represented in Australia by 7 genera and 10 species. Four genera in the NT with 3 in the DR. [Whiffin, 1990].

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1. | Leaves 1-nerved, glabrous | Memecylon |
| 1. | Leaves 3-7-nerved, hairy or bristly | 2 |
| 2. | Leaves 2-13 mm wide; tertiary veins not conspicuous, parallel;
anthers isomorphic; fruit capsular | Osbeckia |
| 2. | Leaves 10-75 mm wide; tertiary veins conspicuous, parallel;
anthers dimorphic; fruit fleshy, indehiscent | Melastoma |

MELASTOMA L.

A genus of 70-100 species; from India, China and SE Asia through to Australia and the Pacific Islands. One species recognised in Australia.

M. affine D. Don

Shrub to 3 m. Stems, petioles, leaf veins and inflorescence densely covered with erect, stiff, lacinate scales. Petiole 10-14 mm long. Leaf blades with 3-5 longitudinal nerves and conspicuous parallel cross veins, elliptic to ovate, 40-130 mm long, 10-75 mm wide, L/W c. 1.6; hispid with \pm swollen, decurrent based hairs with patent tips. Inflorescence terminal or subterminal, cymose, c. 7-flowered. Bracts and bracteoles present, caducous. Hypanthium 5-7 mm long. Calyx lobes 5, caducous, alternating with denticles. Petals 5, obovate, purple to mauve, to 20 mm long. Stamens

usually 10, dimorphic; larger stamens with basally prolonged connective and bilobed appendage at apex of filament; smaller stamens not or little prolonged with a small appendage; anthers with a terminal pore. Ovary usually 5-locular; ovules numerous on axile placentas. Fruit subfleshy, indehiscent, urceolate, to 10 mm long. Flowering and fruiting: all year. Fig. 44

From India, SE Asia through to New Guinea, northern Australia and southwards to coastal NSW. Common in the DR in perennially moist sites often on rainforest margins. The fresh flower buds are eaten (G. Wightman, pers. comm.).

MEMECYLON L.

A genus of 200-300 species; throughout the Old World tropics with 3 species in Australia, 2 of which occur in the NT but with 1 in the DR.

M. pauciflorum Blume

Shrub or small tree to 5 m, glabrous. Bark grey to brown, rough, fissured. Branchlets finely ribbed.

Leaves shortly petiolate; blades discolourous, elliptic to obovate, 24-70 mm long, 10-30 mm wide, L/W 1.75-3, \pm coriaceous, lateral veins obscure,

apex acuminate to emarginate. Inflorescence axillary, short, often on old wood. Flowers 4-merous. Hypanthium c. 1.5 mm long. Calyx lobes present as small teeth. Petals caducous, c. 2 mm long, thick. Stamens 8, isomorphic; anthers versatile, thecae terminal, opening by slits, with dorsal appendage and central circular gland. Ovary 1-locular; ovules c. 8 on a basal placenta. Fruit blue or black, fleshy,

indehiscent, globose, c. 8 mm diam., crowned by persistent calyx, 1-seeded. Flowering: Nov - Feb; fruiting: immature fruit present in most months, maturing Nov - May. Fig. 44

From SE Asia to New Guinea and northern Australia. Common in coastal to subcoastal monsoon thickets on a variety of soils but typically associated with sandstone.

OSBECKIA L.

A genus of c. 60 species from Africa, India through Malesia to northern Australia. Two species in Australia, both in the NT with 1 in the DR.

O. australiana Naudin

Perennial, scabrous shrub to 2 m high. Vegetative parts densely covered with ciliate or subplumose bristles. Leaves shortly petiolate; blades 3-nerved, linear to narrowly lanceolate, 15-60 mm long, 2-13 mm wide, L/W 3.7-11.2. Inflorescence a few-flowered, condensed, bracteate terminal cyme, rarely elongate. Flowers 5-merous. Hypanthium 5-6 mm long, densely covered with bristly protuberances, those on the hypanthium summit

longer. Calyx lobes triangular, c. 5 mm long, ciliate. Petals purple, obovate, c. 10 mm long, ciliate at apex. Stamens 10, isomorphic; anthers beaked with single terminal pore. Ovary 5-locular; ovules numerous on axile placentas. Fruit a capsule, c. 7 mm diam., seeds numerous. Flowering and fruiting: all year. Fig. 44

Occurs from the Kimberley to the western half of Arnhem Land. Common in the DR in open swampy or perennially wet habitats.

Melastoma

Memecylon

Osbeckia

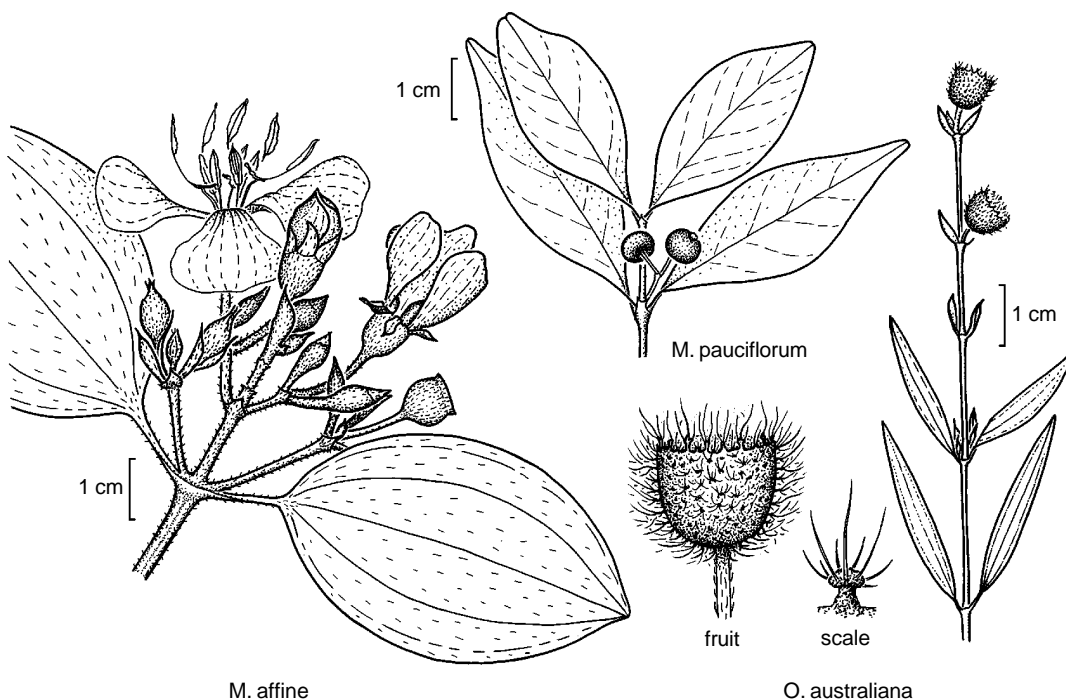


Fig. 44