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# MANGROVES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA: *IDENTIFICATION and TRADITIONAL USE*

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**EXTRACT: *Campostemon* (pp. 65–68)**

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DARWIN 2006

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***Camptostemon*****BOMBACACEAE**

**DERIVATION:** The Greek 'kamptos' means flexible, and 'stemon' means stamen, in reference to the bent staminal filaments characteristic of the genus.

A genus of two species occurring in south-east Asia, *C. schultzii* also occurs in tropical Australia, including tidal areas of the NT.

***Camptostemon schultzii* Mast.****Kapok Mangrove**

**DERIVATION:** Named *schultzii* in honour of Frederick Schultz, who as a member of George W. Goyder's survey party in the late 1860s, first collected this species from Port Darwin.

**DESCRIPTION:** Generally a shrub to 5 m, occasionally a tree to 22 m; bark grey with longitudinal fissures, stem base fluted; pneumatophores forming knotted lenticelled lumps to 3 m from the stem base. Leaves alternate, petiole to 10 mm, lepidote; lamina elliptic lanceolate, 6.2–9.2 x 2.0–4.1 cm, lepidote below, sparse scales and glands above; apex rounded, base attenuate. Cymes axillary, epicalyx lobes irregular, 2 mm long, subtending mature bud; calyx cup-like, lobes 6 mm long. Corolla lobes 5, obovate, reflexed, 6 mm long, exterior lepidote, base connate, pubescent; staminal tube enclosing style to 4 mm; anthers 20, 1 mm long, on tree portion of filament to 2 mm long. Ovary superior, locules 2, uniovular, placentation axillary; style 5 mm long; stigmas 2, fleshy, peltate. Capsule obovoid, 1 cm long, lepidote, calyx and epicalyx persistent. Seeds 2, deltoid-obovoid, 9 mm long, densely woolly.

**HABITAT:** *Camptostemon schultzii* prefers soft muddy soils that are regularly inundated, and is commonly found fringing tidal waterways. Associates include *Avicennia marina*, *Rhizophora stylosa* and *Aegiceras corniculatum*.

**DISTRIBUTION:** *Camptostemon schultzii* occurs disjunctly around the NT coastline, it is very common in upper reaches of creeks in Darwin Harbour. It is more common in western areas of the north coast and has not been recorded from the eastern coast of the NT. Also recorded from Western Australia and Queensland, extra-Australian records include Papua New Guinea and the Moluccas in eastern Indonesia.

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** Small, dark brown scales on new growth (most easily seen with a magnifying glass but visible with the unaided eye); fruit with a woolly tomentum covering seeds.

**ETHNOBOTANY:** The ash from the burnt dry wood of this species is widely used in Arnhem Land as medicine for several skin disorders.

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Djambarrpuyngu people use a mixture of ash from burnt driftwood and water as a wash to treat skin sores, leprosy, fungal infections and scabies (Smith 1991). Charred wood may also be soaked in seawater and kneaded into a paste-like consistency; this is applied to tinea lesions several times a day (Aboriginal Communities of the NT 1993). A lotion can also be made by adding more seawater, this alkaline and mildly antiseptic liquid can be applied to scabies, sores and ringworm to relieve itching (Aboriginal Communities of the NT 1993). This mixture is also applied to knees of children to hasten walking if they are slow to begin walking (Wightman & Smith 1989).

Tiwi people use the large trunks for canoes or simply as floating logs to use when swimming a long way. The wood is considered good firewood as it burns quickly and is easy to light; the timber is very light and buoyant and is often found washed up on the beach (Puruntatameri et al. 2001). The buoyant timber is also used to make floats for fishing (Galpagalpa et al. 1984).

Iwaidja speakers consider it poor firewood as it burns too quickly (Blake et al. 1997).

#### **Recorded Aboriginal language names**

Gany'tjarangay (Djambarrpuyngu)

Wuuduku (Djambarrpuyngu)

Wuuduku (Yolngu Matha)

Gumidbum (Iwaidja)

Jinjinga / Tungkwuka / Patialinga (Tiwi)

Aboriginal people in the Kimberley (Elliot & Jones 1982) made canoes and catamarans from this timber. In the west Kimberley the buoyant stems were used to make the kalwa or double raft used to travel around the resource rich but highly indented coastal areas (Akerman 1975).

**NOTES:** Though no data on *C. schultzii* pollination is available, insects and wind are suspected as pollinating agents. Flowers are produced from June to October; mature capsules appear between October and February. The thick walled, buoyant capsule is capable of medium range water dispersal, the woolly tomentum covering the seed aids both water and wind dispersal.

As the wood of *C. schultzii* is very light and buoyant, the stems of large trees can regularly be seen washed up at spring high tide marks. Smaller stems and branches are often washed up at the high tide mark, and can be easily identified by the pale colour and very light weight of the wood.

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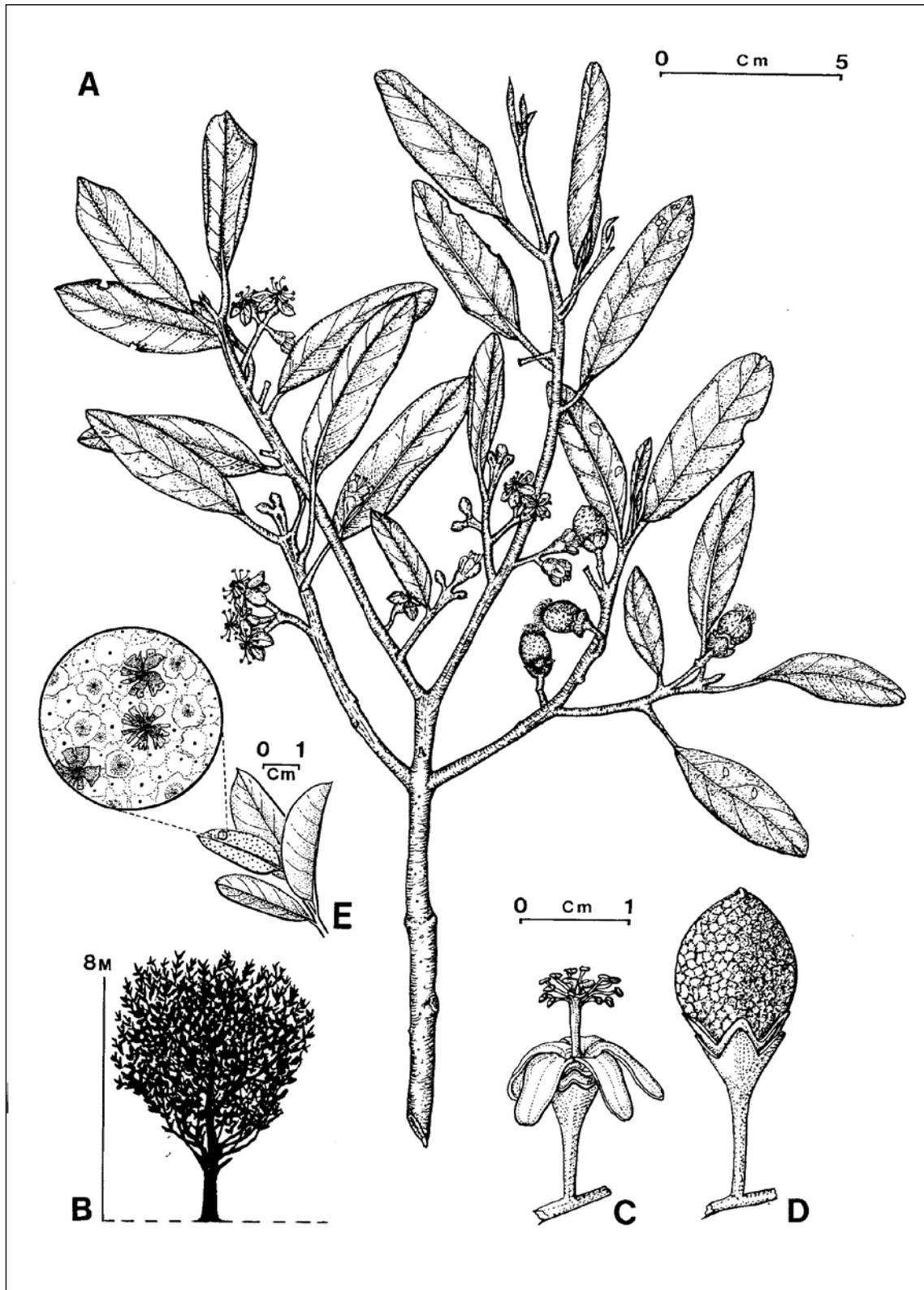


Figure 17. *Camptostemon schultzii*. A, flowering branch; B, habit; C, flower; D, fruit; E, new leaves with close-up of scales (A, C, E, G. Wells s.n., DNA 9969; D, Martensz & Schodde 745, DNA).