
MANGROVES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA:

IDENTIFICATION and TRADITIONAL USE

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EXTRACT: *Cynometra* (pp. 81–83)

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DARWIN 2006

Cynometra

CAESALPINIACEAE

DERIVATION: The Greek 'kyno' means dog, and 'metre' means uterus, in reference to the fruits resemblance to the shape of a bitch's womb.

A pantropic genus of about 70 species, two species occupy rear mangal habitats; one of these, *C. iripa*, occurs in Australia and is known from three localities in the NT.

Cynometra iripa Kostel.

Wrinkle-pod Mangrove

DERIVATION: The Latin 'ir' means in or into, and 'ripe' means bank of stream, in reference to the habitat of this species, beside tidal waterways.

DESCRIPTION: Tree or shrub, spreading to 6 m; bark brown, tight, smooth. Leaves distichous, bijugate, leaflets of lower pair smaller than upper pair; lower pair 2.0–3.1 x 1.0–1.6 cm, upper pair 4.3–5.6 x 2.3–2.9 cm; leaflets asymmetrically elliptic, apex emarginate with minute apicule in sinus, base asymmetrically attenuate; petiole rugose, 3 mm long; rachis 10–15 mm long with brown pustules; petiolule rugose 1 mm long, all shortly hairy. Stipules caducous. Racemes axillary, sessile, simple; in bud densely contracted, almost globular, clothed in bracts. Rachis 3–4 mm long, pubescent; pedicel 4–6 mm long; bracts scale-like, 1 mm long, bracteoles obovate, 2 mm long. Flowers bisexual; receptacle campanulate. Calyx lobes 4–5, 3 mm long, reflexed at anthesis. Corolla lobes 5, narrow, 2.0 x 0.3 mm, glabrous. Stamens 10; filament 3.5 mm long; anther 0.5 mm long, apiculate. Ovary unilocular, stipitate, densely hairy; style 3 mm long, glabrous, askew from ovary; stigma small. Pod woody, subglobular with distinct beak, 1.8 x 3.0 cm, surface deeply rugose, shortly hairy. Seed(s) 1 (–2), rarely formed.

HABITAT: *Cynometra iripa* occurs in rear mangal environments, in areas that receive perennial freshwater input. Associated with it in this situation is *Bruguiera sexangula*. *Cynometra iripa* may also occur in areas above the high tide mark.

DISTRIBUTION: *Cynometra iripa* is known from three localities in north-east Arnhem Land, the Cato and Walker Rivers and Inglis Island. This species also occurs in Queensland; extra-Australian localities include India, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Spreading shrub or small tree; leaves compound consisting of two pairs of opposite, asymmetric leaflets; fruit a deeply wrinkled woody pod with a distinct beak.

NOTES: Lassak and McCarthy (1981) report Indians using *C. iripa* as a purgative and a treatment of scabies and leprosy. The timber may be used structurally and as a source of dye (Maiden 1889).

In the past *C. iripa* has been confused with *C. ramiflora* L., however, Knaap-van Meeuwen (1970) concludes that *C. ramiflora* does not occur in Australia.

The fruit is capable of floating for up to two months, due to buoyant tissue in the fruit wall (Guppy 1906). However, this species rarely produces viable mature seed though flowering may be intense (Knaap-van Meeuwen 1970). Little can be said about phenology of this species in the NT, as fruiting collections have been made only in October and December. However, Queensland populations of *C. iripa* produce flowers during May to October, fruit have been collected in January, May and June.

References: Knaap-van Meeuwen 1970, Ross 1998.

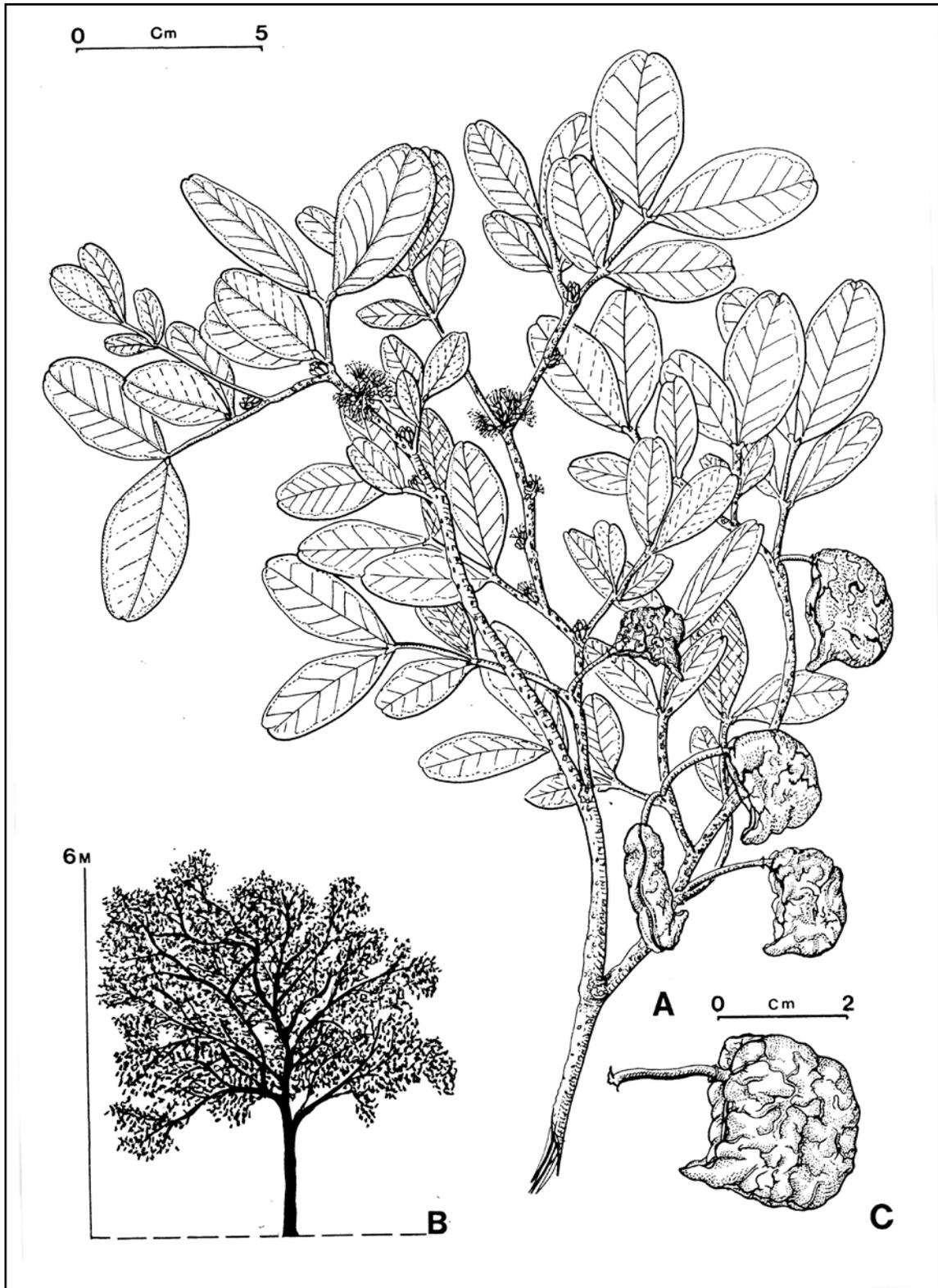


Figure 22. *Cynometra iripa*. A. flowering and fruiting branch; B, habit; C, fruit; (A, J. Elsol 654, BRI; C, C. White 10120, BRI).