

AUSTRALIAN BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES STUDY



FLOODPLAIN FLORA

A flora of the coastal floodplains
of the Northern Territory, Australia

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Extract: Sapindaceae

SAPINDACEAE

Shrubs and trees or sometimes climbers or herbs, dioecious, monoecious, polygamodioecious or polygamous. *Leaves* alternate or rarely opposite, simple, trifoliolate, or pinnately compound; stipules usually absent. *Flowers* bisexual or more commonly unisexual with the androecium or gynoecium reduced, all small, bracteate, actinomorphic or zygomorphic, in axillary or terminal mostly cymose or panicle-like inflorescences or the flowers solitary and axillary. *Calyx* segments 4–10, connate or distinct, imbricate or valvate. *Corolla* absent or mostly of 4–6, free, usually clawed petals with 1 or 2 hairy scale-like appendages sometimes present towards the base. *Nectary disc* usually present. *Stamens* (4) 8 (many), inserted within a floral disc, free, reduced in females and exerted in males; anthers tetrasporangiate and dithecal, longitudinally dehiscent. *Gynoecium* of 2–6 carpels united to form a compound, superior, 1–8-locular ovary; ovules 1 or 2 per locule; style 1, entire or with a 2- or 3-lobed stigma or the styles more or less distinct. *Fruit* fleshy or dry, indehiscent or dehiscent. *Seeds* usually with an aril; embryo curved; endosperm absent.

Chiefly a tropical and subtropical family containing about 150 genera and 2,000 species, the greatest diversity being in Asia and America. In Australia 30 genera and about 190 species.

CARDIOSPERMUM L.

Herbaceous *climbers*, monoecious; branches, leaf axes and peduncles usually ribbed. *Leaves* biternate; leaflets dentate, serrate, lobed or pinnatifid. *Inflorescences* axillary, bracteate racemes or cymules; peduncles long and apically with 1 or 2 pairs of circinnate tendrils. *Flowers* unisexual. *Sepals* 2-paired; outer pair smaller, flat; inner pair concave. *Corolla* with the petals 4, paired; scales when present oblong, hooded. *Disc* 4-lobed. *Stamens* 6–8; filaments filiform. *Capsule* 3-locular, stalked, inflated, loculicidally dehiscent. *Seeds* 1 per locule, globose, smooth and with a small aril.

A tropical genus of 12–14 mainly American species. Two species are naturalised in Australia, and one, *C. halicacabum*, occurs in NT. The generic name refers to the heart-shaped aril on the seed of this species.

Taxonomic reference: Reynolds (1985).

C. halicacabum L. var. **halicacabum**

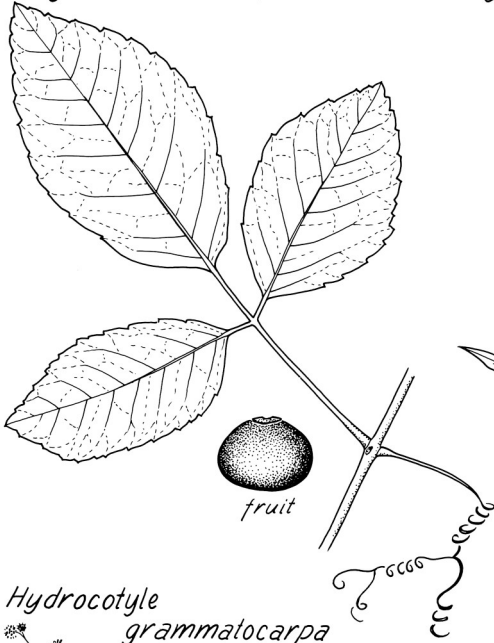
Vines, with the stem and branches slender and trailing, markedly ribbed, glabrous to conspicuously puberulous. *Leaves* 4–14 cm long; leaflets ovate to lanceolate, 1–5.5 cm long, coarsely toothed or lobed or rarely entire, glabrous or puberulent. *Inflorescences* with peduncles 2–8 cm long. *Sepals* 1–4 mm long, 1–2 mm wide. *Corolla* with 2-paired, white petals c. 3 mm long, 1.5 mm wide; posterior pair with puberulent scales and crests. *Stamens* with hairy filaments. *Capsule* subglobose or pear-shaped, inflated and papery, 2.5–3 cm long. *Seeds* globose, 2.5–5 mm diam., black; aril brownish and distinctly 2-lobed and somewhat heart-shaped. *Flowering & fruiting*: all months. Fig. 23 (*Latz 3094; Russell-Smith 7750*).

Apparently widespread in tropical regions (Australia: WA, NT, Qld, NSW). Occurs in northern NT, extending as far south as Wave Hill. It is a common component of the floodplain flora, having been collected from floodplains associated with, for example, the Daly, East Alligator and Mary rivers and Fogg Dam. However, it is not restricted to the plains, growing for example on the banks of the Douglas River and in coastal vine thickets at the mouth of the Fitzmaurice River.

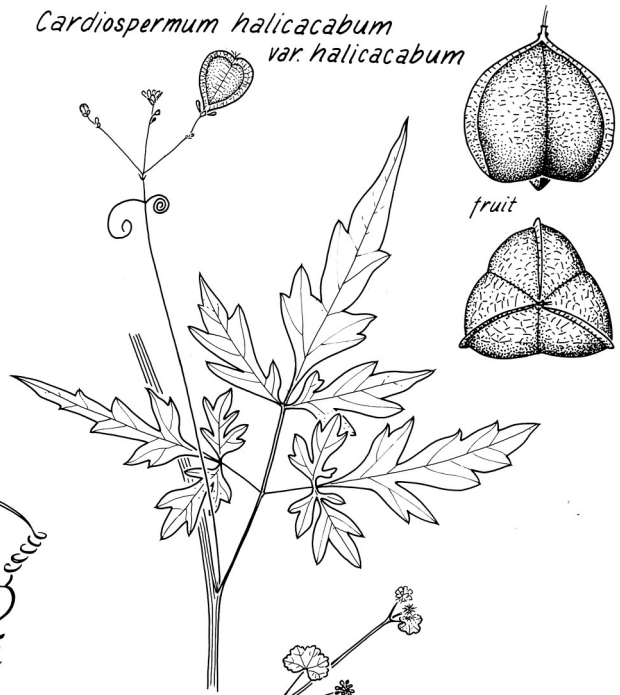
First described from a specimen from the East Indies, this taxon was considered by Reynolds (1985) to be a weed in Australia. However, early collections from the NE coast of Australia by Brown and from the Victoria River and Sea Range by Mueller (cited in Bentham, 1863), plus the provenance of the type specimen, suggest that at least in northern Australia it is not a naturalised weed.

Two varieties of the species, *i.e.* var. *halicacabum* and var. *microcarpum* (Kunth) Blume, have been recognised. The latter is only known from Qld and differs in having depressed-obovoid fruit to 1 cm long (Reynolds, 1985).

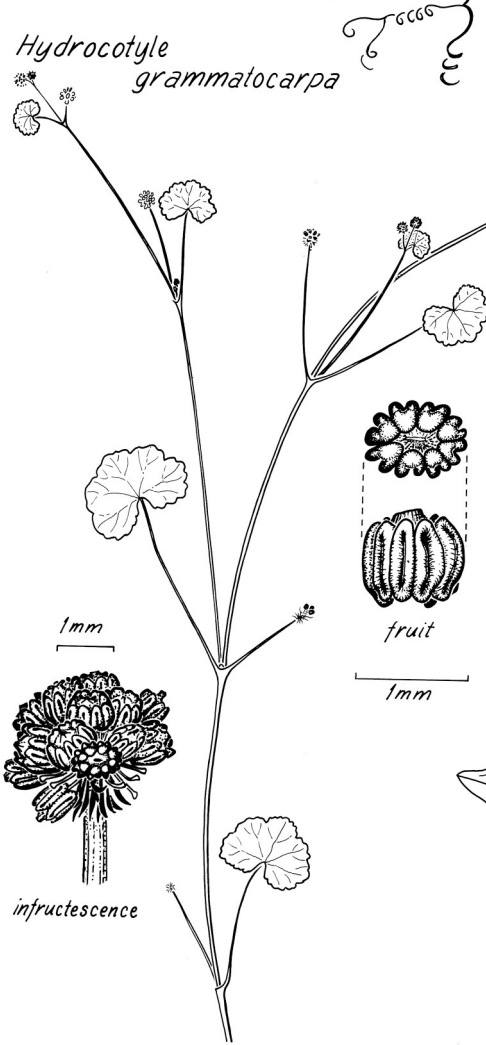
Cayratia maritima



Cardiospermum halicacabum
var. *halicacabum*



Hydrocotyle
grammatocarpa



all illustrations
unless otherwise indicated } 1cm

Physalis minima



FIGURE 23