

Yellow Carabeen – *Sloanea woollsii*



It is one of the 4 species of the genus *Sloanea* that grow in Australia. The genus *Sloanea* is comprised of approximately 150 species and is scattered throughout the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world. It is part of the Indo-Malay complex of plants that came from the north into Australia.

The other 3 species of *Sloanea* are;

- *Sloanea australis* – Maiden's Blush;
- *S. macbrydei* - Northern Yellow Carabeen; and
- *S. langii* - White Carabeen.

Nomenclature: *Sloanea*, honours Sir Hans Sloane, principal founder of the British Museum; *woollsii*, honours Rev. Dr W. Woolls (1814-1893), schoolmaster and botanist in New South Wales. Carabeen is from a NSW coastal Aboriginal language.

It is found from Bulahdelah in the south to Gympie in the north.

The stronghold of Yellow Carabeen is the Acacia Plateau and the Border Ranges area of NSW and Queensland. In NSW, most of these areas are now National Park but were former State Forests. In 1973, I spent time working with in these forests assisting in designing and locating of road upgrades and timber surveys.

During this time I first met Neil "Curley" Humphries, who later became my boss and mentor when I was the Harvesting Research Officer for the Forestry Commission. Curley was one of the main drivers in the introduction and development of the modern timber harvest machinery in Australia.

Yellow carabeen is one of the common tree species in subtropical rainforests of Australia growing up to 55 metres tall and a stem diameter of 2.5 m. It is a typical long-lived (up to 800 years), slow growing and shade tolerant

The stem is prominently buttressed at the base with the buttresses sometimes extending about 4 m up the stem. The buttress is typically convex in outline, a distinctive feature in the rainforests of New South Wales. The crown is often spreading with numerous sub-erect branches; the dense canopy consists of light yellow-green leaves.

Yellow carabeen grows on mostly well-drained sites in rainforest situations. It prefers fertile soils and is found on soils derived from basalt and rich alluvium. It is generally being found in higher and more exposed localities and often being the dominant species. Common associates include rosewood (*Dysoxylum fraserianum*), red cedar (*Toona ciliata*), prickly ash (*Orites*

excelsa) and giant stinging tree (*Dendrocnide excelsa*). There is an unusual association of yellow carabeen with Antarctic beech (*Nothofagus moorei*), west of Wauchope.

In a rainforest, tree identification can be problematic and even harder to species type of a log in the sawmill yard. So bark and trunk characteristic and the smell and taste of the blaze are critical. Some species like prickly ash (*Orites excelsa*) are easy to tell due its bark while others are very difficult.

Yellow carabeen bark: Grey or brownish grey, mostly wrinkled or grooved and with clusters of close-spaced horizontal lines around the trunk. The vertical lines of raised pustules are most distinctive. The blaze is reddish brown becoming lighter towards the sapwood, with an unpleasant odour. The outer half of the blaze is patterned by paler vertical bands and lines.



The leaves vary depending on the age of the tree. Adult leaves are alternate, jointed at base of leaf (articulated), toothed margins, glabrous; nervation visible both surfaces, raised on undersurface; foveolae present in axils of midrib and lateral veins.

Flowers are white and flowers from October to November.

Fruits: Capsules, yellow-brown, oval, about 2 cm long, 2-celled, splitting into 2 valves covered on the outside by rigid, slender prickles about 0.8 cm long. Seeds shiny black, about 0.6 cm long, solitary in each cell, almost completely covered by an orange to red-brown aril. They mature from March to July.



Timber

Heartwood is pale yellow-brown. The inner heartwood can be dark brown which is difficult to season without degrade. The sapwood can be very wide and of similar colour to the heartwood but is often discoloured due to sap stain and very susceptible to lyctid borer.

The wood texture is fine to medium with an even and straight grain. The green density is 880kg/m^3 and the air dry density is 620kg/m^3 . Care needs to be taken when drying to avoid sap

stain and surface checking. Some collapse occurs during the drying process. Shrinkage is 2.5% radial and 4.5% tangential. After recondition 2% radial and 4% tangential. Janka hardness rating of 3.2 when green and dries to a rating of 4.9.

The wood is firm but fairly easy to work and glues well. It was used for plywood (its main former commercial purpose), joinery, furniture and turnery.