

Eucalyptus urnigera

urn-fruited gum

subgenus: *Symphomyrtus*; section: *Maidenaria*; series: *Orbiculares*

AUTHORITY: *Eucalyptus urnigera* J.D.Hook, *London Journal of Botany* 6, 477 (1847).

Type: Mt Wellington, Tas., *R.Gunn 1074*, 1282 (syn: BM, K, NSW); Lake Echo, Tas, *R.Gunn 1231* (syn: K).

NAME: From the Latin *urna* meaning 'urn' and *gera* meaning 'bearing', referring to the shape of the buds and fruits.

DESCRIPTION: Tree, sometimes several-stemmed, 5 to 25 metres tall, forming an inconspicuous lignotuber. Bark mostly smooth, grey to orange-tan to olive green over cream. Branchlets sometimes waxy. Juvenile leaves rounded, dull to glossy, bluish to green. Adult leaves lanceolate, 12 to 28 mm wide, dull to glossy, blue-green to green, sometimes waxy. Buds and fruits held pendulously on peduncles up to 25 mm long, occurring in groups of 3. Flower buds on pedicels, sometimes waxy, with a flattened-beaked operculum that is usually slightly wider than the hypanthium at the join. Flowers white, occurring mainly in autumn to winter. Fruits on pendulous pedicels, sometimes waxy when young, 6 to 11 mm wide, distinctly urn-shaped, with valves below rim level.

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT: Endemic to Tasmania, *E. urnigera* is restricted to high altitude sites in the south-east of the state, prominently in the Mt Field area and on the Wellington Range. Outlying populations occur in the Alma Tier area and at Mt Seymour in the north, Tylers Hill in the south and on Maria Island in the east (Williams & Potts 1996). None of these outlying populations has been field verified by the author. Further field collections may prove the species to have a wider and more continuous distribution at high altitude sites. The species grows on the mid to upper slopes and plateaux in mountainous terrain on very rocky soils in vegetation varying from forest at lower

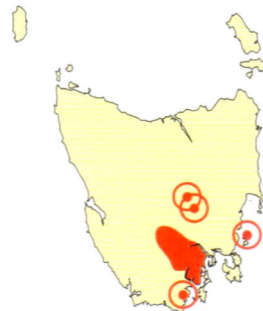
altitudes to low open woodland at the tree-line.

CULTIVATION & USES: Rarely cultivated, *E. urnigera* may be useful as an ornamental tree in very cold climates with high rainfall, due to its colourful smooth stems. The species tolerates periodic snowfall and temporary waterlogging but is very drought susceptible.

NOTES: Despite being a distinctive species due to its pendulous, relatively large, urn-shaped buds and fruits on long peduncles, *E. urnigera* is very variable in the degree of waxyness of the branchlets, leaves, buds and fruits. This variation is mostly population-based and related to altitude, with completely non-waxy individuals with glossy green leaves occurring at lower elevations on Mt William and conspicuously waxy individuals with duller, bluish leaves occurring near the tree-line on the same mountain.

Eucalyptus urnigera is closely related to *E. gunnii* but is easily distinguished from the latter by the larger, more urn-shaped buds and fruits that are held pendulously due to the longer peduncles and pedicels (peduncles 3 to 9 mm long in *E. gunnii*).

Eucalyptus urnigera differs from the more coastal *E. morrisbyi* mainly in the more urn-shaped and pendulous buds and fruits due to the longer peduncles (peduncles 4 to 10 mm long in *E. morrisbyi*).





Eucalyptus urnigera near 'The Chalet',
Mt William Road, south-west of Hobart,
Tasmania.

