

Acacia baileyana

[Synonyms : *Acacia baileyana* var. *aurea*, *Acacia baileyana* var. *purpurea*, *Racosperma baileyana*]

COOTAMUNDRA WATTLE is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to south-eastern Australia (especially New South Wales) it has fluffy, fragrant golden-yellow balls of stamens.

It is also known as *Acácia baileiana* (Portuguese), *Akacia* (Swedish), *Akacie* (Danish), Bailey acacia, *Baileys Akazie* (German), Bailey's mimosa, Bailey's wattle, Cootaminda wattle, Fernleaf acacia, Golden mimosa, *Guldakacia* (Swedish), *Kulta-akasia* (Finnish), Mimosa (English, French), and *Mimosa de Bailey* (French).

Baileyana can commemorate one of several people, including Frederick Manson Bailey, CMG, Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Marshman Bailey, Liberty Hyde Bailey and Vernon Bailey. The most likely candidate appears to be in this case an Australian botanist, horticulturist, plant collector and writer, Frederick Manson Bailey, CMG (1827-1915) who emigrated from England to Australia with his family in 1838. He was made colonial botanist in 1881 (an appointment he retained until his death), then in 1902 he received the Clarke Medal from the Royal Society for New South Wales and was created Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George in 1911. Of particular note among his published works and numerous papers (predominantly on Queensland) are *The Queensland Flora* and *The Fern World of Australia*. He is said to have found Cootamundra wattle growing in his Queensland garden.

In the Mediterranean on the French Riviera the Cootamundra wattle is commercially cultivated for the cut-flower industry – and is often familiar to florists as Mimosa.

Environmentally it is sometimes cultivated on embankments so that the root system can stabilise them and prevent erosion and it has also gained some popularity in certain areas as an ornamental garden plant. (Cootamundra wattle can provide fuel and in Australia it offers a food source for a particular species of parrot.) On the other hand it has become invasive in some places, even in parts of Australia (from which it hails) and forms dense thickets which displace natural habitat.

Today the Shire of Cootamundra (in New South Wales, north-west of Canberra) enjoys the fame brought by this acacia which has been shown to be native to its region. The town has planted this evergreen widely, has adopted it as an emblem, and has instituted a project known as the 'Ribbon of Gold' which aims to cultivate Cootamundra wattle along all the approaches to the town.

This wattle featured on an Australian postage stamp issued in June 1978.