

Eucalyptus globulus

[Synonyms : *Eucalyptus gigantea*]

TASMANIAN BLUE GUM is an evergreen tree. Native to Australasia (particularly Victoria, and Tasmania) it has small creamy flowers.

It is also known as Australian blue gum, *Blahovičnik kulatoplodý* (Czech), *Blaugummibaum* (German), Blue gum, Bluegum eucalyptus, Blue gum tree, Botany bay kino, Compact blue gum eucalyptus, *Eucalipto* (Italian), *Eucalipto* (Italian, Portuguese), Eucalyptus (English, French, German, Swedish), *Eucalyptusbaum* (German), Eucalyptus tree, *Eukalyptus* (German), *Eukalyptuspuu* (Finnish), *Febergummiträd* (Swedish), *Febertræ* (Danish), Fever tree, *Fieberbaum* (German), *Gommier bleu* (French), Gum tree, *Kuumepuu* (Finnish), Silverleaf mountain gum, Silver mountain gum, Southern blue gum, Stringy bark tree, and Tas blue gum.

Oil (or essence) is obtained from mature leaves – the prime source of Eucalyptus oil. A dark reddish brown resin (known as Kino) is obtained in a semi-fluid state from incisions made in the trunk.

Warning – large doses are poisonous and can cause delirium, convulsions and death. The resin can turn teeth and saliva red.

Globulus is derived from Latin *globosus* (round, spherical) or *globus* (ball, globe sphere).

The Tasmanian blue gum was first found in Tasmania and is probably the most valuable, economically, of all the species of eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus*). Within 100 years of the recognition of its advantageous qualities it has become the source of oil, shade and timber, in addition to a viable means of soil drainage in semi-tropical regions in Africa, North America, South America and India, as well as in southern Europe. (It was introduced to the Mediterranean in about 1860.) The main extractors of oil are Spain, India, Brazil and Argentina.

Others as well as this species provide woodpulp (plant cellulose). This is used as a thickener in such products as shampoos or in the preparation of synthetic fibres. It also provides paper pulp, particularly from those plants especially grown for this purpose in Brazil.

The leaves can be used in dried floral arrangements if they are first preserved in glycerine.

The flowers yield a sought-after honey that is especially popular in Portugal.

The Tasmanian blue gum until relatively recently was a floral emblem of Tasmania. However because the Tasmanian blue gum is such a familiar sight in southern Victoria on the Australian mainland it was decided in the 1960s that, as a Tasmanian emblem, it would be superseded by another of the Island's plants known locally as leatherwood. }

Veterinary medicine makes use of eucalyptus in remedies for distemper in dogs, parasitic skin ailments and horse flu'.

Australian Aborigines have long used eucalyptus to treat fever, wounds and burns.

The oil is a commercial ingredient used in proprietary medicines for use on burns, for colds eg. Vicks' Vapour Rub familiar to many in Britain in the 1940s, and for antiseptic products. It is also used by the toiletry industry as a flavouring in toothpaste and can be found in insecticides ie. flea repellents. The wood (which is unsuitable for carpentry) provides a source of wood pulp, cellulose, charcoal and fuel and is also used as timber for ships, buildings, piling, general construction, poles and fencing. The essence is used in

preparing perfumes and in distillation is an ingredient for the drinks industry as well. Medicinally, today eucalyptus oil (obtained primarily from the Tasmanian blue gum) is an important ingredient in pharmaceutical products such as ointments, liniments, cough syrups and lozenges, diabetic treatments, and inhalants for asthma and bronchitis. The resin (kino) is used for sore throats (as a gargle or lozenge), and for treating diarrhoea. Tasmanian blue gum is also used to treat malaria in Africa.