

Syzygium smithii

[Synonyms : *Acmena floribunda*, *Eugenia smithii*]

LILLY-PILLY TREE is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to northern and eastern Australia it has small inconspicuous whitish-green flowers in a conspicuous fluffy mass of white stamens,.

It is also known as Acmena, Creek lilly pilly, Lilli-pilli, Lillipilli satinash, Monkey apple, and Narrow-leaved lilly pilly.

The leaves issue an aromatic smell when crushed. The seeds are distributed by birds.

Its propagation, sale and distribution are banned in New Zealand.

Smithii can commemorate one or more people, including Christen Smith, Sir James Edward Smith, Joannes Jacobus Smith, John Smith and Karl A Harald Smith.

The most likely candidate appears to be in this case an English botanist, physician, writer and lecturer, Sir James Edward Smith (1759-1828) who was a founder member of the Linnean Society of London as well as its first President. He became a Fellow of The Royal Society following his 1784 acquisition and public display of Linnaeus' collection of plant and animal specimens (which was acquired by the Linnean Society after Smith's death). Of his written works authorities appear to emphasise several including *English Botany*, and *A Compendium of the English Flora* (a major extension of one of his earlier works, *Flora Britannica*).

Some authorities say that the deep purple (occasionally white) berries can be made into jams, and drinks.

The fruit are enjoyed by birds (including cassowaries and doves) and some bats like flying foxes.

Lilly-pilly tree with its prominent fruit clusters is cultivated as an ornamental or a dense hedging plant in its Australian homeland and in California, Hawaii and South Africa. (The owner of one Australian nursery has perfected a technique for growing lilly-pilly hedges that has led him to christen the plant 'neighbour-be-gone' tree because of the speed of its growth there and the density of the hedging achieved in a relatively short time – which well illustrates its vigorous propensities.) In some places town planners have grown it as a street tree.

But as witnessed by New Zealand's prohibition referred to above, the plant needs to be considered with care as it can become invasive. And another consideration in some regions is the fact that it is highly flammable – so much so that some authorities actually recommend it be grown at least 30 feet away from buildings.