

# Lima Stringybark

*Eucalyptus alligatrix* subsp. *limaensis*

Photo: Fiona McCallum

A Nationally Threatened Species of the Valley Grassy Forest Community

## Description

The Lima Stringybark (*Eucalyptus alligatrix* subsp. *limaensis*) is a large tree growing up to 30 m in height, with fibrous bark persisting to the smaller branches. Adult leaves are up to 12 cm long, shiny, green to olive in colour, with a lanceolate to sickle-like (falcate) shape. Juvenile leaves are bluish-white (glaucous) and round to oval in shape. The leaves of epicormic growth (directly from the trunk or larger branches) are intermediate between adult and juvenile leaves, both in colour and shape.

The buds are diamond-shaped, green and stalkless (sessile). Flowering occurs in April. Flowers are 3 – 8 mm long. The fruit ('gumnuts') mostly occur in groups of three, and are cone or bell-shaped (4 – 5 mm wide and 3.5 – 5 mm long).

## Distribution

The Lima Stringybark is endemic to Victoria and is found over a small area near Lima and Swanpool in north-eastern Victoria.

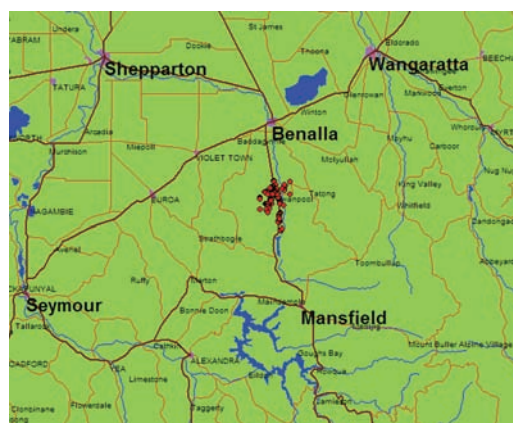


Figure 2 Lima Stringybark (*Eucalyptus alligatrix* subsp. *limaensis*) distribution (red dots) (Source: FIS, DSE 2007)

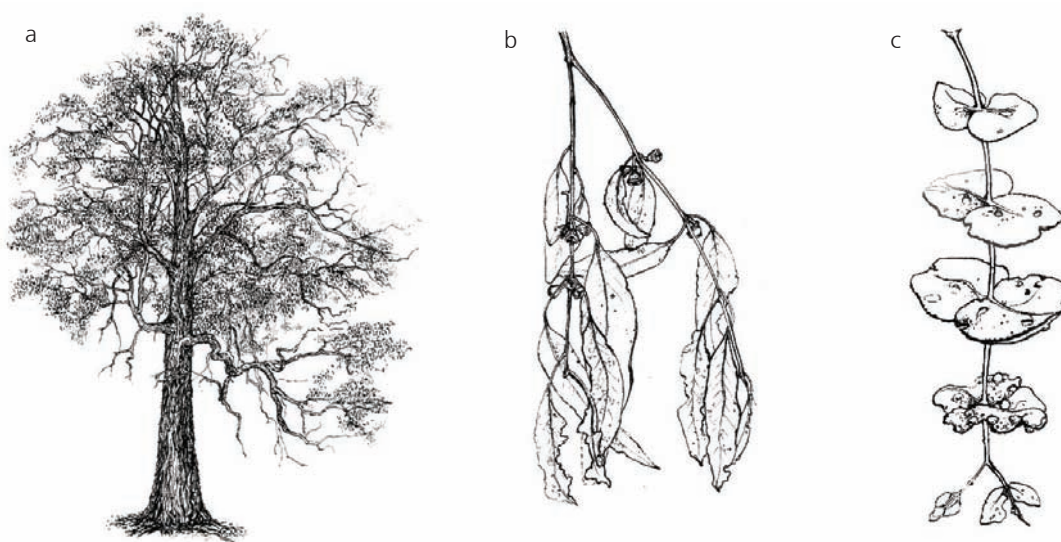


Figure 1 Lima Stringybark (a) Mature tree (b) Adult foliage and fruit (c) Juvenile foliage (botanical illustrations: Janet Fogarty 2009).

## Lima Stringybark (*Eucalyptus alligatrix* subsp. *limaensis*)

### Habitat

The tree occurs on unconsolidated sediments of dark grey or brown gritty loam soils in the valleys of foothills above 220 m elevation. It is commonly associated with Red Stringybark (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*), Narrow-leaved Peppermint (*E. radiata*), Red Box (*E. polyanthemos*), Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*), Long-leaved Box (*E. gonicalyx*), Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), Black Wattle (*A. mearnsii*), Silver Wattle (*A. dealbata*) and Ovens Wattle (*A. pravissima*).

### Conservation status and abundance

The Lima Stringybark is listed as Vulnerable nationally under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. In Victoria it is listed as Threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, and is classified as Endangered.

Approximately 1500 trees remain in total, mainly on roadsides, with smaller numbers as scattered trees in paddocks. Trees are known to occur at about 138 sites.

### Decline and threats

As most populations occur on roadsides, the plants are vulnerable to damage by roadside maintenance. Threats to the Lima Stringybark include:

**Slashing and removal of timber:** Slashing of roadsides prevents seedlings becoming established.

**Clearing:** Few sites are currently reserved for nature conservation, so clearing will continue to be a potential risk. Loss of surrounding native vegetation can increase weeds.

**Ring-barking of trunks by stock:** This can kill trees, if severe. Trees occurring on private land are most at risk.

**Grazing:** Grazing leads to reduced seedling establishment. Soil compaction and nutrient build-up can lead to dieback of mature trees and reduced recruitment of new seedlings.

**Weed invasion:** Weeds are present at all sites and can significantly reduce recruitment through competition.

**Isolation/fragmentation:** Many populations are small and highly fragmented. Genetic diversity may be reduced. Small populations are vulnerable to local extinction by major events, such as severe bushfire.

### Similar species

The Lima Stringybark is similar to three other eucalypts with which it commonly grows. These, and their distinguishing characters, are:

- **Yellow Box:** has smooth bark on the upper trunk and limbs. The lower bark tends to be in short ribbons or strips.
- **Red Stringybark:** has buds in groups of 6 to 12, and dome-topped fruit to 10mm wide with three prominent valves.
- **Long-leaved Box:** adult leaves are dark green and 10 – 24 cm in length. Juvenile leaves are very similar (but with a thicker edge on the leaves of the Long-leaved Box). The bark is 'flaky', rather than 'stringy'.



Figure 3 Fruit of the Red Stringybark (left) and Lima Stringybark (right); note the large difference in size.  
Photo F. McCallum

### What you can do

- **Fence** off trees in paddocks from stock to protect existing individuals
- **Encourage** and nurture natural regeneration of Lima Stringybarks (e.g. in fenced-off areas)
- **Control** weeds around existing trees, and encourage or establish a native vegetation understorey (aids in weed suppression and encourages insect-eating birds)

Published by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment Melbourne, October 2010

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Authorised by the Victorian Government, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne.

ISBN 978-1-74242-717-1 (print)  
ISBN 978-1-74242-718-8 (online)

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