Melastoma malabathricum subsp. malabathricum

Family
Melastomataceae

Scientific Name
Melastoma malabathricum L. subsp. malabathricum

Common name
Blue Tongue; Lasiandra; Native; Native Lasiandra; Rhododendron, Straits; Straits Rhododendron

Stem
Usually flowers and fruits as a shrub about 1-3 m tall.

Leaves
Leaf blades about 6-11 x 2-4 cm, clothed in simple, +/- prostrate hairs, more conspicuous on the upper than on the lower surface. Each leaf with a midrib and two major longitudinal veins plus two other longitudinal veins which could nearly be regarded as intramarginal veins. Large hairs on the twigs between the petiole bases resemble stipules.

Flowers
Calyx tube about 5-10 mm long, outer surface densely clothed in prostrate hairs while the inner surface is +/- glabrous. Calyx lobes about 4 mm long. Petals about 20-30 mm long. Stamens ten, dimorphic. Shorter stamens with glands at the base of the anther, longer stamens with glands on the filament about 6-7 mm from the base of the anther, and the filament between the anther and the gland is distinctly bent and curved. Anthers with a terminal pore.

Fruit
Capsules about 10 mm diam., +/- fleshy and splitting irregularly usually in the equatorial region. Seeds immersed in a dark, almost black, pulp. Seeds very small, about 0.5-0.6 mm diam., cochleate or U-shaped. Testa minutely tuberculate with the tubercles arranged in +/- longitudinal lines. Embryo +/- boomerang-shaped, cotyledons hooked at the apex, about as wide as the radicle. Two types of 'seeds' are produced, those with a pale testa are fully developed and viable and those with a red testa are empty and lack an embryo. Seed germination time 14 to 42 days.

Distribution and Ecology
Occurs in WA, NT, CYP, NEQ, CEQ and southwards as far as north-eastern New South Wales. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 1100 m. Usually grows along roads or in disturbed areas in rain forest, monsoon forest or wet areas in open forest and heath. Also occurs in Asia and Malesia.

Natural History & Notes
Fruit eaten by Double-eyed Fruit-parrots. Cooper & Cooper (1994).

Commonly grows as an ornamental for its large pinkish purple flowers.
Herb (herbaceous or woody, under 1 m tall)

Shrub (woody or herbaceous, 1-6 m tall)

Synonyms


RFK Code

3129

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