

Red Kamala

Mallotus philippensis



Photo: <http://www.anbg.gov.au/>



Family: Euphorbiaceae

Evergreen shrub or small tree to 25 m



Distribution: grows north of the Hunter River in New South Wales, along the coast of Queensland, the Darwin coast and is also through the warmer regions of Asia including India.

Description: The trunk is fluted and irregular at the base. The grey bark is smooth, or with occasional wrinkles or corky bumps. The long pointed leaves are green on top, the underside pale grey in colour. With a magnifying glass, small red glands may be visible. Yellow-brown flowers from June to November. Fruit is a three lobed capsule, covered in red powdery substance.

Propagation: Germination is only successful if sown from very fresh seed.

Habitat: tolerates salty coastal winds, grows best in full sunlight or tolerates partial shade, likes well-drained clay loam, loam, sandy loam soils, moderately drought-tolerant.

Uses: The wood is suitable for tool handles and building. The granules which cover the ripe fruit are used in India as a dye ('kamala') for dyeing silk and wool bright orange. Medicinal: produces *rottlerin*, a potent large conductance potassium channel opener.