

The Living Valley



Durobby or Coolamon Tree: Syzygium moorei

The watermelon pink flowers of the Durobby or Coolamon tree, one of the Tweed's floral emblems, is an example of the colour and uniqueness of our Living Valley. It is found only in the Richmond, Brunswick and Tweed valleys from the Big Scrub to Mudgeeraba 15km across the Queensland border, the limits of the original lava flow of the Tweed Volcano. Durobby, thought to be the aboriginal name for the *Syzygium moorei* as this tree is named in western taxonomy, is found in subtropical lowland rainforest.

Due to extensive clearing, particularly on slopes and creek flats, the species is listed as vulnerable. It appears on the 'Treasures of the Tweed' mural to highlight its rarity and limited range. This majestic tree can be seen locally in parks and in front of the Murwillumbah Civic Centre.

The tree's botanical name *Syzygium moorei* refers to its distinctive paired dark green leathery leaves. It has grey-silver bark with soft scales on a straight trunk. Flowers are showy with fluffy stamens, attracting nectar eating birds and flying foxes. Unusually these blooms are clustered directly on older branches. The cream fleshy golf-ball sized fruits are edible but bland; however they can be cooked and sweetened to make a fragrant drink.

The Durobby's close relative in north Queensland *Syzygium cormiflorum* is named for its cream flowers and fruit that cluster on the trunk making them more accessible for animals such as Cassowaries and perhaps once the extinct horned Meiolaniid land turtles. Has the loss of these animals to eat and disperse the seeds of the Durobby contributed to its rarity?

By the Earth Learning team. Earth Learning is a not for profit environmental NGO run by local volunteers. Enquiries 02 6679 1439