

# *Allocasuarina verticillata*

**Kaurna name – Kurku**

**Common name – Drooping sheoak**

The Drooping Sheoak is native to south-eastern Australia. They grow from coastal headlands and plains, to rocky outcrops on inland ranges.

A medium sized bushy, evergreen tree that has a rounded head. When young they can look rather sparse and scraggly but this changes with age. Bark is dark grey, hard and fissured. The trees are long-lived (up to 100 years). They have large root nodules with micro-organisms that "fix" nitrogen into the soil.



## **Leaves**

Characteristically, the long, weeping, segmented branchlets function as leaves. The leaves are reduced to minute scales encircling the branchlet joints. Fallen branchlets can form a dense cover, preventing the development of undergrowth (allelopathy), making sheoak woods remarkably quiet.



## **Female or Male**

Sheoaks are either male or female.

**Male plants** have long slender, yellowish-brown flowers (below). They are wind pollinators, producing clouds of pollen in late autumn and winter.



*Left: Flowers from a male tree*

**Female trees** produce small red and cream fluffy flowers on their branches in winter. These develop into brown oval seed cones, (actually woody fruit). They cones are covered in points that, when mature, split lengthways to release dark-brown, winged seeds



*Female flowers*



*Female fowlers develop into cones*

## **Uses**

The foliage is acidic and was traditionally chewed to produce saliva and so reduce the effects of thirst. The young cones were chewed (oak apples), roasted or used to flavor water.

The wood is very hard making it ideal clubs spears, boomerangs, shields, and digging sticks.

It is the primary food source for the endangered glossy black-cockatoo

## **Interesting Facts**

Drooping sheoak - (*Allocasuarina verticillata*). Sheoak is the common name for *Allocasuarinas* and *Casuarinas*, supposedly because the wood was very similar to oak. Interestingly, when the wind blows through their leaves you hear the sound of the ocean (the **shee** in sheoak).