

# *Leptospermum laevigatum* Coast Tea-tree



*Leptospermum laevigatum* , GBG

*Leptospermum laevigatum* commonly known as Coast Tea-tree is a salt resistant and hardy, woody shrub or tree that is native to South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria and, at some stage, was introduced to Western Australia. There are approximately 83 species of *Leptospermum*, of which 19 are found in Victoria. Many grow in wet conditions, but are usually associated with saline soils on coastal dune scrub, dune grassland and coastal dune woodland.

All tea-trees have 5 petalled flowers (mostly white, sometimes pink) and small roundish fruit capsules with slits on top which open to release the seeds. Coast tea-tree is a nectar plant for butterflies and its often twisted and gnarled trunk is a sculptural features along the coast. Flowering time is usually from August and through Spring. Leaves are grey-green in an alternate arrangement. The bark flakes in thin greyish strips and was used by Wathaurong people to make nets.

*L. Laevigatum* can become an environmental weed , where it invades local indigenous habitat such as in western Victoria and northern New South Wales. In some inland locations it has hybridised with *L. myrsinoides*.



*Leptospermum laevigatum*. Flowers (Photo: Tatters, flickr.com CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).  
Maturing fruit with 8 sectors, GBG. Fruit can have 7 - 11 sectors.

I've chosen to focus on *L. laevigatum* here in the Geelong Botanic Gardens as it is a very old tree and it is possibly part of the natural landscape. This tree's sprawling, gnarled limbs create a beautiful sculpture. Look closely at its trunk: the rough texture and subtle colour of grey, white and pale brown (like milky tea). Also other plants (even one of its own seeds) have made a home in the grooves and hollows of its trunk, along with lichen.

This is a tree to treasure.

## Summary

Family: Myrtaceae

Genus: *Leptospermum*

Species: *L. laevigatum*

Location in GBG: In the eastern corner of the 19th Century Garden, near the toilet.

## References

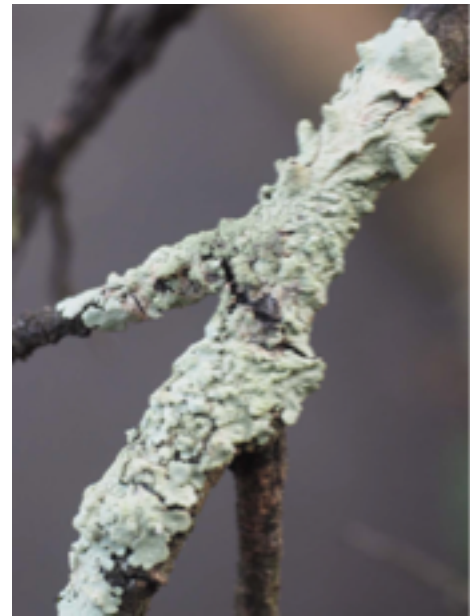
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*Leptospermum laevigatum*.

Open seed capsule (Photo: Forest & Kim Starr, commons.wikimedia.org CC BY 3.0).

Lichen growing on stem. GBG



Map of eastern part of Geelong Botanic Gardens (GBG),  
with location of *Leptospermum laevigatum*

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