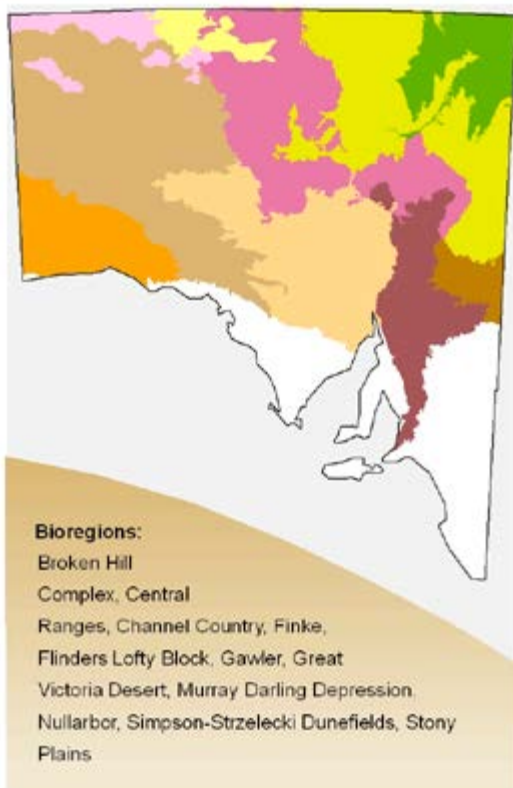
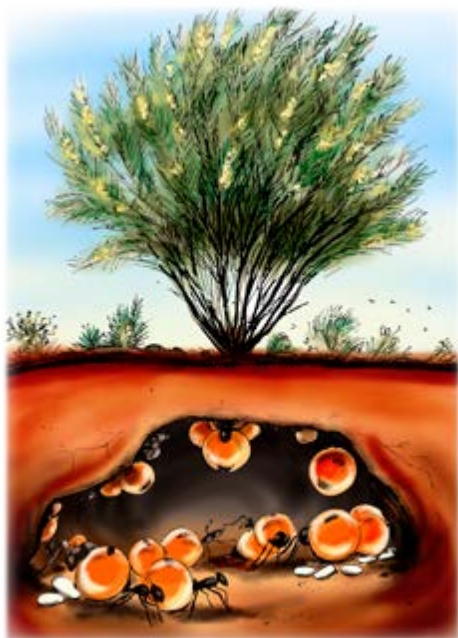


Mulga

Acacia anuera



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Mulgas are single or multi-stemmed acacias. They are classified as a small tree or a large shrub and are the main species in many desert ecosystems, such as Mulga woodlands. Mulgas are also an important food source for stock, especially during droughts.

While most acacias have relatively short life spans, Mulgas are long lived. They can grow to a maximum height of 10 metres. Reduced rainfall or drought conditions can slow or temporarily stop the growth of Mulgas. For this reason, it sometimes takes a Mulga tree 100 years to become mature. It is believed they can live between 300-400 years.

Acacias do not have leaves in a botanical sense, but instead have phyllodes. These are slim, flattened leafstalks. Phyllodes are arranged to avoid full sun and channel rainwater to the roots.

Underground, Mulgas have a taproot which can help the plant access deeper moisture and store water and nutrients. Mulga seedlings which are just 10cm high may have taproots extending three metres into the ground.

Mulga wood is very hard and is popular for use as fence posts and in craftwork. Mulga also had a wide range of traditional uses for some groups of Aboriginal people. These included: food from the seeds, lerps and sap; tools from the wood; resin from the phyllodes; and medicines from the leaflets and twigs. The name 'Mulga' comes from the name one Aboriginal group used for the shields they made from its wood. Honey Ants (*Camponotus inflatus*) make their nests underground beneath Mulga trees. These ants are another popular traditional food as their abdomens are full of a sweet honey-like substance.

Reproduction

Mulgas produce bright yellow flowers at any time of year, usually following rain.

Habitat

Mulgas are common in arid to semi-arid areas of South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.



Threats

The key threats to Mulga are introduced herbivores, such as rabbits and goats, some of which have established feral populations and led to the suppression of the regeneration of arid shrubs such as Mulga and thereby threatening their long-term survival. In some areas, seedlings are eaten and trampled on by rabbits and goats which can be devastating. It is unlikely that there was any successful Mulga regeneration between the 1880's and the 1950s due to the impact of the rabbit!

Mulga trees are also threatened mainly by past and present clearance for agriculture. Changed fire regimes can be another problem – acacias are less fire resistant than eucalyptus.

Climate change also creates a less suitable habitat.

Small insects called Red Mulga Lerp (*Austrotachardia acaciae*) live on the outer branches of Mulga trees. They exude a honey dew to protect themselves from animals. which can be sucked straight off the branch, or soaked in water to make a sweet drink!

Conservation

You can help the Mulga by:

- finding out more about the many ways Aboriginal people use Mulgas and telling your class about it
- getting involved with revegetation projects, like the Million Trees Program.

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

