


# Grevillea robusta

<i>Grevillea robusta</i>	
	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
Order:	Proteales
Family:	Proteaceae
Genus:	<i>Grevillea</i>
Species:	<b><i>G. robusta</i></b>
Binomial name	
<b><i>Grevillea robusta</i></b> A.Cunn. ex R.Br.	



Leaves and flowers

*Grevillea robusta*, commonly known as the **southern silky oak** or **silky oak**, or **Australian silver oak**, is the largest species in the genus *Grevillea* of the family Proteaceae. It is not closely related to the true oaks, *Quercus*. It is a native of eastern coastal Australia, in riverine, subtropical and dry rainforest environments receiving more than 1,000 mm per year of average rainfall.

## Description

It is a fast-growing evergreen tree, between 18–35 m (59–115 ft) tall, with dark green delicately dented bipinnatifid leaves reminiscent of a fern frond. It is the largest plant in the *Grevillea* genus, reaching diameters in excess of 1 m (3 ft). The leaves are generally 15–30 cm (6–12 in) long with greyish white or rusty undersides.

Its flowers are golden-orange bottlebrush-like blooms, between 8–15 cm (3–6 in) long, in the spring, on a 2–3 cm long stem and are used for honey production. Like others of its genus, the flowers have no petals, instead they have a

long calyx that splits into 4 lobes.<sup>[1]</sup> The seeds mature in late winter to early spring, fruiting on dark brown leathery dehiscent follicles, about 2 cm long, with one or two flat, winged seeds.

## Uses

Before the advent of aluminium, the timber from this tree was widely used for external window joinery as it is resistant to rotting. It was also popular for making furniture. There are severe restrictions on the harvesting of this tree now as the number of trees became depleted. Silky Oak is a valuable timber and was one of Australia's best known cabinet timbers.

It is the best tree which can be used for fencing and it is one of the fastest growing trees.

## Cultivation

When young it can be grown as a houseplant where it can tolerate light shade, but prefers full sun as it grows best in warm zones. If planted outside, young trees need protection on frosty nights. Once established it is hardier and tolerates temperatures down to  $-8\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $18\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$ ).<sup>[2]</sup> It needs occasional water but is otherwise fairly drought-resistant.

*Grevillea robusta* is often used as stock for grafting difficult-to-grow grevilleas.

Care needs to be taken when planted near bushland as it can be weedy.

The tree has been planted widely throughout the city of Kunming in south-western China forming shady avenues.

This plant has gained the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit.<sup>[3]</sup>

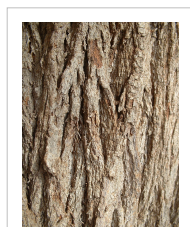
*Grevillea robusta* (Southern Silky Oak) is also grown in plantations in South Africa<sup>[4]</sup> and can also be grown along side maize in agroforestry systems.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Toxicity and allergic reactions

The flowers and fruit contain toxic hydrogen cyanide.<sup>[6]</sup> Tridecylresorcinol in *G.robusta* is responsible for contact dermatitis.<sup>[7]</sup>



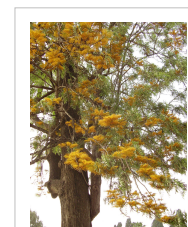
Silky Oaks planted in a tea garden



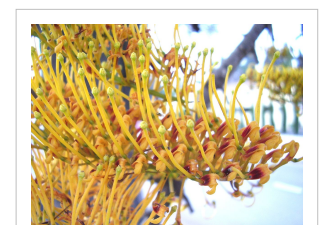
Trunk bark



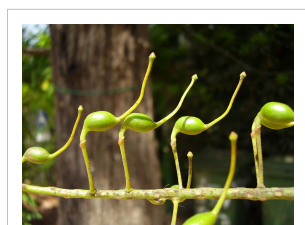
Leaf



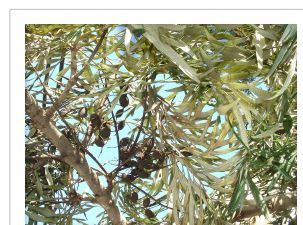
Flowering branches



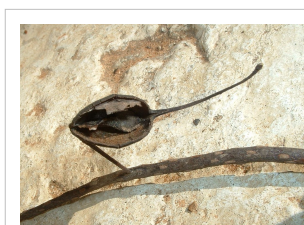
Flowers



Unripe seed pods



Leaves and dry seed pods



Dry seed pod



## References

- [1] *RHS A-Z encyclopedia of garden plants*. United Kingdom: Dorling Kindersley. 2008. pp. 1136. ISBN 1405332964.
- [2] "Garden Guides: Silkoak" (<http://www.gardenguides.com/plants/plant.asp?symbol=GRRO>). .
- [3] <http://apps.rhs.org.uk/plantselector/plant?plantid=888>
- [4] Overseas-grown Australian Timber Species ([http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/good\\_wood/os\\_ozsp.htm](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/good_wood/os_ozsp.htm)) Retrieved on 8 December 2008
- [5] Jackson, N. (2000). "Tree pruning as a means of controlling water use in an agroforestry system in Kenya". *Forest Ecology and Management* **126** (2): 133–152. doi:10.1016/S0378-1127(99)00096-1.
- [6] Everist, S.L., *Poisonous Plants of Australia*, Angus & Robertson, 1974.
- [7] Menz, J., Rossi, R., Taylor, W.C, Wall, L., Contact dermatitis from Grevillea'Robyn Gordon', *Contact Dermatitis*, Vol. 15, Iss. 3, pp 126-131, Apr 2006

## External links

- Grevillea robusta fact sheet on *Forest, Farm, and Community Tree Network (FACT Net)* (<http://www.winrock.org/forestry/factpub/factsh/grevillea.htm>)
- Germplasm Resources Information Network: *Grevillea robusta* (<http://www.ars-grin.gov/cgi-bin/npgs/html/taxon.pl?18006>)
- Plants of Hawaii (images): *Grevillea robusta* ([http://www.hear.org/starr/hiplants/images/thumbnails/html/grevillea\\_robusta.htm](http://www.hear.org/starr/hiplants/images/thumbnails/html/grevillea_robusta.htm))

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