


# Dendrocnide moroides

| <i>Dendrocnide moroides</i>  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
|  |                           |
| Scientific classification  |                           |
| Kingdom:   | Plantae                   |
| Division:  | Magnoliophyta             |
| Class:   | Magnoliopsida             |
| Order:   | Rosales                   |
| Family:  | Urticaceae                |
| Genus:   | <i>Dendrocnide</i>        |
| Species:   | <i><b>D. moroides</b></i> |
| Binomial name  |                           |
| <i><b>Dendrocnide moroides</b></i><br>(Wedd.) Chew                                 |                           |

*Dendrocnide moroides*, also known as the **Gympie Gympie**, **moonlighter**, or **stinger**, is a large shrub native to rainforest areas in North Eastern Australia, the Moluccas and Indonesia. It is best known for stinging hairs which cover the whole plant and deliver a potent toxin when touched. It is the most virulent species of stinging tree.

*D. moroides*, usually grows as a single-stemmed plant reaching 1 to 2 metres in height. It has large, heart-shaped leaves that are about 12 to 22 cm long and 11–18 cm wide, with finely toothed margins. The species is an early coloniser in rainforest gaps, seeds germinate in full sunlight after soil disturbance.

The species is unique in the genus in having bisexual inflorescences in which the few male flowers are surrounded by female flowers.<sup>[1]</sup> The flowers are small, and once pollinated the stalk swells to form the fruit. Fruits are juicy and mulberry-like and are bright pink to purple. Each fruit contains a single seed which is on the outside of the fruit.<sup>[2]</sup>

Contact with the leaves or twigs causes the hollow silica-tipped hairs to penetrate the skin. The sting causes a painful stinging sensation which can last for days or even months and the injured area becomes covered with small red spots joining together to form a red, swollen mass. The sting is known to have killed one human, and it can also kill dogs and horses. However the sting does not stop several small marsupial species, including the Red-legged Pademelon, insects and birds from eating the leaves. Some research has been done on the composition of neurotoxin; however, the exact composition and method of action for the toxin remains unknown.

Although relatively common in Queensland, the species is uncommon in its southern-most range, and is listed as an endangered species in New South Wales.<sup>[3]</sup>

The giant stinging tree and the shining-leaved stinging tree are other large nettles occurring in Australia.

## References

- [1] *Flora of Australia* (<http://www.anbg.gov.au/abrs/abif/flora/stddisplay.xsql?pnid=188>) volume 3, 1989, ABRS/CSIRO
- [2] Hurley, M. 2000. Growth dynamics and leaf quality of the stinging trees *Dendrocnide moroides* and *Dendrocnide cordifolia* (Family Urticaceae) in Australian tropical rainforest: implications for herbivores. *Australian journal of Botany* 48:109–201
- [3] Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW). Gympie Stinger (<http://threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au/tsprofile/profile.aspx?id=10214>) profile

## External links

- *Dendrocnide* (<http://www.bio.davidson.edu/people/kabernd/seminar/2001/home/mad/nettles/Dendrocnide/dendrocnide.html>) at Department of Biology, Davidson College

# Article Sources and Contributors

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