

Australian Threatened Species

Miena cider gum *Eucalyptus gunnii* ssp. *divaricata*

Conservation Status



Mature Miena cider gum. Photo by Oberon Carter

National: Endangered
(*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

Tasmania: Endangered
(*Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*)

What does it look like?

The Miena cider gum is a small- to medium-sized woodland tree which grows to between 12 and 15 metres tall, often with obvious forked (divaricate) branches. This species is part of a continuum between *Eucalyptus gunnii* and *Eucalyptus archeri* though it can be distinguished from the rest of the *Eucalyptus gunnii-archeri* complex by its smaller, broader leaves, the extent of the waxy covering, greater retention of juvenile foliage, greater underground root development and the absence of marked oil glands on the juvenile leaves.

Where does it live?

The species is endemic to Tasmania and is restricted to frost hollows in open woodland around the Great Lake region on Tasmania's Central Plateau. The sites where the Miena cider gum is found tend to be poorly drained and prone to frost. This species is known from a 40 by 40 kilometre area from west of Miena to Interlaken.

How many are there?

There are only eight small stands of the Miena cider gum currently known, occupying in total only a few hundred hectares. In 2003 it was estimated that there were more than 10,000 individuals, however only about 2000 were setting seed. The population size and the number of trees flowering has probably declined since 2003. The species is not known from any reserve.

Did you know...

- The sap of the Miena cider gum is edible and was thought to have been eaten by the Tasmanian Aborigines and by early European settlers.
- Early settlers laid possum traps beneath Miena cider gum trees because possums also found them highly palatable.
- The Miena cider gum has one of the highest levels of frost tolerance of all Tasmanian Eucalypts (making its genes highly valuable to the forest industry).
- It has been suggested that one impact of climate change will be the long-term loss of frost resistance genes in *Eucalyptus* which would be particularly threatening for the Miena cider gum.

Changing climate: A major threat

Why is changing climate a threat to the Miena cider gum?

The Miena cider gum faces a range of threats including: a low rate of seedling establishment due to grazing and browsing by sheep, wild deer, brush-tailed possums and rabbits; the intolerance of mature trees to drought; browsing by possums and insects; and frequent fire.

Over the last 20 years, drought, possibly linked to climate change, has caused severe tree decline across the eastern side of Tasmania's Central Plateau. This has drastically affected most stands of the Miena cider gum. While this species is highly frost tolerant, it is highly intolerant to drought and fire.

The two populations representing the most extreme form of the Miena cider gum have been hardest hit, and there are presently no mature individuals setting seed and no seed is held in the canopy. In these populations all

of the mature trees appear to be dead. Some occasionally re-sprout only to be eaten back again by possums. The only hope for these populations is to encourage the growth of seedlings and exclude all browsing animals.

What is being done?

The Bothwell Landcare Group in collaboration with the Threatened Species Network (TSN), Central Highlands Council and the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water has succeeded in receiving an Envirofund grant for protection of the Miena cider gum.

This project aims to recover four stands of Miena cider gum by:

- fencing to exclude stock and rabbits
- banding mature trees and caging seedlings to exclude possums
- propagating and planting seedlings and
- trialing methods of insect control.

How you can help

- Volunteers will be needed to help Bothwell Landcare Group install bands and cages, plant seedlings, water during dry weather and monitoring sites for animal intrusions. For further information contact the Tasmanian TSN Coordinator.
- Walk, cycle or use public transport.
- Save on heating and cooling costs by insulating, draught-sealing and shading, while setting thermostats appropriately. For more information see the 'Heating and Cooling' fact sheet of the *Your Home Technical Manual*: www.greenhouse.gov.au/yourhome/
- Switch off lights, appliances and equipment when they're not needed and install energy-efficient fluorescent lamps such as compact fluorescent lights.
- Minimise waste of packaging and materials—refuse, reduce, re-use, recycle.
- For other tips on saving energy around the home, go to the Australian Greenhouse Office web site: www.greenhouse.gov.au/gwci/index.html

Banding work. Photo by Oberon Carter



Contacts and references

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You can also find out more information about Australia's threatened species by visiting www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened or contacting the Department of the Environment and Heritage Community Information Unit, email ciu@deh.gov.au, or freecall 1800 803 772.

- Lazarus, E, Lawrence, N and Potts W 2003, *Threatened Flora of Tasmania CD*, Threatened Species Unit, Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment.
- Potts, BM, Potts, WC and Kantvilas, G 2001, *The Miena Cider Gum, Eucalyptus gunnii ssp. Divaricata (Myrtaceae): A Taxon in Rapid Decline*, Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, vol. 135.

