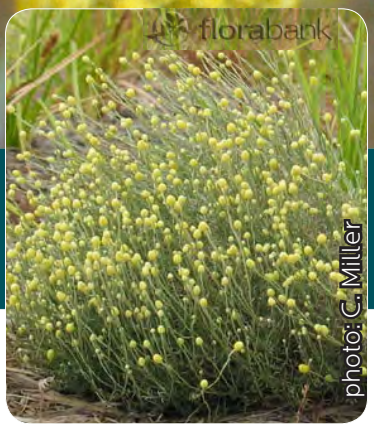
photo: J. Lindner

Calocephalus citreus



***Calocephalus citreus* is a small perennial herb with slender, erect branches, 15–60 cm high, and attractive silvery grey foliage, dying back in winter [8, 9]. It has masses of egg-shaped lemon-yellow flower heads, hence it's common name: Lemon Beauty-Heads [4].**

Population map:

www.ala.org.au/explore/species-maps/

Natural Populations

Calocephalus citreus is found in all states except NT [7, 8]. It is rare in Tasmania, known from only a few locations in the south-east, where it inhabits undisturbed dry grasslands [12, 13].

C. citreus grows in grasslands or open woodlands on clay to loam soils [8, 9], and is often found in seasonally damp areas [4]. It is widespread but rarely abundant as it is intolerant of moderate levels of disturbance including grazing or fertiliser use. It is most commonly found in ungrazed remnants and roadsides [4, 6, 8].

Flowering and Seeds

C. citreus flowers from October to March [4, 9].

The fruits (achenes) are tightly clustered in the old dried flower heads. Each head contains many achenes that loosen in the head and develop a fluffy appearance as they mature. At maturity the individual achenes should release very easily from the seedhead. Each achene has a feathery attachment called a pappus [1].

Seeds are collected in January-March [11]. Collect entire seedheads by hand into large paper bag, then allow to dry. Small portable vacuum cleaners have also been used for collection [1]. Seeds can also be flicked into a bucket, or stripped by running a cupped hand up the stem [11].

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Do not collect the seed in wet weather or after rain, as the seed readily retains moisture, and can develop fungal problems [1].

Seed handling involves breaking up the seedheads, then sieving to remove any large material. The seeds are difficult to separate so are usually stored mixed in with some parts of the old flower. Lightly dust stored seed with an insecticide. Many related species have a 2-3 months after-ripening period. The seed can have high germination rates, although, results can be erratic. Some species retain viability for at least 2-3 years, others lose viability quickly [1].

Cultivation and Uses

C. citreus propagates readily from seed [1], usually within 3-7 weeks. Seed should be surface sown or given a light cover [2]. Propagation also can be made by division or from cuttings [5, 7].

C. citreus needs a dry, well-drained position in part to full sun [7, 9]. It is frost hardy [3, 5], and can be a good ground cover, providing a living mulch, keeping the ground surface temperature and soil moisture content fairly even, and suppressing weed growth [3].

The flowers are highly attractive to a range of native insects [4].

To source seeds or plants:
www.grassywoodlands.org.au

References

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[11] *Native Plant Seed in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. Collecting, Processing and Storing Locally* (2004). Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank & North East Community Seedbank. Online: **http://www.dookie.unimelb.edu.au/files/Seedbank.pdf**

[13] Curtis, W.M. (1963). *The Student's Flora of Tasmania. Part 2.* Government Printer, Hobart.

Internet links

[5] Australian National Botanic Gardens & Australian National Herbarium, Harden Species List: **http://www.anbg.gov.au/greening-grainbelt/harden-species-list.xls**

[8] PlantNET National Herbarium of New South Wales: **http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=sp&name=Calocephalus~citreus**

[9] Australian Native Plants Society, Local Native Plants for Local Gardens: **http://nativeplants-canberra.asn.au/gardens.aspx**

[12] Tasmanian Department of Primary Industry, Notesheet: **http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/SLEN-5P37UP?open**

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Greening Australia Capital Region
Ph: 02 6253 3035
http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/community/capital-region

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