



(a) photo: Richardson

## Cassinia arcuata



(a) photo: M. Fagg

*Cassinia arcuata* is a small shrub with aromatic foliage to 2 m high. It has small narrow leaves and white woolly long slender branches. Common names are Drooping Cassinia, Chinese Scrub [13], Sifton Bush [15], Biddy Bush [3] or Tear Shrub [6].

Population map:

[www.ala.org.au/explore/species-maps/](http://www.ala.org.au/explore/species-maps/)

### Natural Populations

*Cassinia arcuata* is found in NSW, Vic., S.A and W.A. It is not as widespread as *Cassinia culeata* (Common Cassinia) but is still found in a wide variety of habitats on a range of soils [3, 11, 12, 17].

*C. arcuata* is a native plant which is inclined to become invasive in pasture [15, 9, 16]. In NSW it is listed as noxious in Class 4 (the growth and spread of the plant must be controlled in accordance with a local management plan) in Boorowa, Cabonne, Goulburn-Mulwaree, Harden, Queanbeyan, Southern Slopes, Upper Lachlan, Wingecarribee and Yass Valley LCAs.

### Flowering and Seeds

*C. arcuata* flowers from November to April [14]. The flowers last for many months [4]. Numerous small fluffy fruits appear after flowering, grouped at the end of branchlets [7, 13]. Seeds are released 3-14 days after maturity [3, 12].

The fine seed with its parachute of small hairs can be carried long distances on the wind. Seed can be carried in wool of sheep or on other animals feeding among plants during the seeding period [16].

When mature the seeds will drop to the ground when the branches are shaken. Seeds are easily collected by shaking or gently rubbing the heads over a bag. Avoid collection

in wet or windy weather [1]. The seedheads dry and break up easily when seed is ripe. Seed handling involves breaking up seedheads and sieving.

To source seeds or plants:  
[www.grassywoodlands.org.au](http://www.grassywoodlands.org.au)

## Cultivation and Uses

*C. arcuata* yields good quantities of seeds in most years and germinates readily. Storage results in a slight drop in seed viability over 2 years. Best results can be expected from fresh seed and no treatment is needed [5, 7]. The seed is very fine and should be surface-sown and covered lightly. Seedlings are very small and may be difficult to handle. Direct sowing into pots is recommended [2, 3, 12].

*C. arcuata* seeds are feasible for direct seeding when sufficient seed is available [1, 7]. Seed is short-lived in the soil [16]. Seed germinates if buried less than 15 mm deep, and some seed may have a 5 month after-ripening period, although from some sites, seed will germinate fresh [10]. Propagation can also be from cuttings [4, 12, 17].

Most soils are satisfactory, provided that they are well drained, and in full sun or part shade. *C. arcuata* is frost hardy [4, 17] and tolerates dry conditions [13].

*C. arcuata* is a pioneer plant [14] and can be used in restoration of gravel pits, mine dumps, highly disturbed and bare soils [8, 12, 13]. It was used by Chinese goldminers to thatch roofs [6, 8], hence the common name of Chinese Scrub [6]. Fast and easily growing, it is also a good ornamental plant [12]. It may be food source for native birds including the Red-Rumped Parrot, Turquoise Parrot, Yellow Rosella and Eastern Rosella [12].

*C. arcuata* is invasive in pasture and on roadsides, especially in shallow, infertile acid soils. It is naturally an understorey shrub in forests

or woodlands, which proliferates following clearing for farming and is favoured by over-grazing. Plants are unpalatable and avoided by stock, so it can become dominant in grazed paddocks. It has been suspected of causing stock poisoning [16]. Hurst (1942) describes the symptoms as being loss of co-ordination of the hindquarters [18].

Dense stands of *C. arcuata* are rare in NSW, but where they do occur they provide harbour for rabbits and compete very strongly with other native species for light and moisture, thus preventing regeneration of a more useful cover [6]. Clumps may represent a fire hazard in dry times [16]. Maintaining strong pasture growth and avoiding over-grazing will discourage re-infestation [16].



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## References

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(a) Pictures under license from the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

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[3] Stelling, F. (ed.) (1998). *South West Slopes Revegetation Guide*. Murray Catchment Management Committee, Albury, NSW.

[4] Wrigley J. F., and Fagg M. (1988). *Australian Native Plants. Propagation, cultivation and use in landscaping*. 3rd Ed. Australia: William Collins Publishers.

[5] Murphy R.G. and Dalton G.S. (1996). *Understorey establishment research. Technical Report No 249*. Primary Industries South Australia.

[6] Cunningham, G.M., Mulham, W.E., Milthorpe, P.L. and Leigh, J.H. (1981). *Plants of Western New South Wales*. D. West: NSW Government Printing Office.

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[8] Walker, K., Burrows, G., and McMahon, L. (2001). *Bidgee Bush, An identification guide to common native plants species of the South Western Slopes of New South Wales*. Greening Australia, South West Slopes.

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[10] Campbell, M. H. (1990). Distribution, ecology and control of *Cassinia arcuata* (sifton bush) in New South Wales. *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture* 30(2) 215 – 220. Online: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/paper/EA9900215.htm>

[18]Hurst, E. (1942). *The poison plants of New South Wales*. New South Wales Poison Plants Committee: Sydney.

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## Internet links

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[11] PlantNET National Herbarium of New South Wales: <http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=sp&name=Cassinia~arcuata>

[12] Charles Sturt University Plant Database: [http://www.csu.edu.au/herbarium/cassarcu\\_sws.html](http://www.csu.edu.au/herbarium/cassarcu_sws.html)

[13] Victorian Flora: <http://www.victorianflora.wmcn.org.au/plantDetail.php?plantno=96.00000>

[14] Yarra Ranges Local Plant Directory: [http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Residents/Yarra\\_Ranges\\_Plant\\_Directory/Middle\\_Storey/Shrubs\\_32-10m/Cassinia\\_arcuata](http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Residents/Yarra_Ranges_Plant_Directory/Middle_Storey/Shrubs_32-10m/Cassinia_arcuata)

[15] Department of Primary Industry: [http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds/profiles/view-noxious-weed/noxious-app?sq\\_content\\_](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds/profiles/view-noxious-weed/noxious-app?sq_content_)

[16] Southern Tablelands and South Coast Noxious Plants Committee: <http://www.southeastweeds.org.au/index.pl?page=163>

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