

Flowers dense, borne singly, each on a c. 0.5mm pedicel within the axil of a minute persistent bract. Calyx c. 1.5mm long, almost hairless, the sepals similarly joined for c. $\frac{1}{2}$ their length. Standard yellow, c. 1.5mm tall, 1mm wide. Wings yellow, c. 2.5mm long from base of calyx, the same length as the yellow keel.

Pod 2-3mm long, c. 1.5mm wide, plump, hairless, almost black when ripe, containing a single seed. Seed c. 1.5mm long, 1mm wide, oval, plump, yellow-brown.

Distribution: Bur., Co., D.D., Lei., Ma., Mi.,

Mo., N.K., P.C., Wa. Also all states except N.T. Native of the Mediterranean region and central Asia to India. It prefers neutral to slightly alkaline soils.

Notes: A rather unpalatable species which contains coumarin; it may taint milk, but not proven to be toxic. Long cultivated as a forage in India. May cause weed problems in wheat fields. Attractive to honey bees. Salt-tolerant. Nodulates, self-pollinating.

References: 3, 26, 46, 96, 111, 121, 130, 140, 141, 174, 180, 204, 287; as *M. parviflora*, 17.

Mimosa

Annual or perennial herbs with more or less prickly stems and sensitive bipinnate leaves. Flowers pink, in dense spherical heads. Stamens 4 or 8. Pods prickly along the margins, breaking up at maturity.

Key to species

Leaves with 3-10 pairs of pinnae
Leaves with 1-2 pairs of pinnae

M. invisa
M. pudica

Mimosa invisa

Giant sensitive plant

Scrambling, tangled shrub, the stems to 5m long, densely covered with downward-pointing curved spines. Stipules c. 5mm long, narrow and pointed, adpressed, persistent. Leaves sensitive, with 3-10 pairs of pinnae, each bearing 11-30 pairs of leaflets. Petiole 40-80mm long, rachis 30-60mm long, both prickly. Leaflets 2-6mm long, 0.7-1.5mm wide, almost parallel-sided, covered with minute spreading hairs.

Inflorescence an almost globose pink to purplish head 5-10mm in diameter borne on a 3-13mm peduncle, 1-3 heads appearing in each leaf axil. Calyx minute. Corolla 1.5-2mm long, green-tipped, 4-lobed. Stamens 8.

Pod 15-35mm long, 4-4.5mm wide, flat, prickly along the margins and over the seeds, dark brown when ripe, containing 3-4 seeds. Seeds c. 3.5mm long, yellow-brown, shiny.

Distribution: Co., N.K., S.K. Also P.N.G. and Indonesia. A native of Central America.

Notes: May cause serious weed problems in pastures and crops in the wet tropics. Has been cultivated as a cover crop; for this purpose the non-prickly var. *inermis* is preferable. Nodulates.

References: 3, 8, 9, 16, 19, 180, 306.

Mimosa pudica

Sensitive plant

Annual or perennial with often prostrate stems to 1.5m long. Stems hairless to densely hairy, sparsely provided with sharp, downward-pointing black-tipped spines. Stipules 3-8mm long, broad towards the base, tapering to a fine point,



Mimosa pudica, Dunk Is., 17°55'S, 146°08'E.

persistent. Leaves very sensitive, with 1-2 pairs of pinnae 15-50mm long, each bearing 10-26 pairs of leaflets. Petiole 15-55mm long, rachis c. 2mm long. Leaflets folding inwards when the plant is touched, 4-15mm long, 1-3mm wide, parallel-sided, sparsely hairy only along the margins.

Inflorescence a dense pink to lilac globose spike 10-13mm long borne on a 10-30mm hairy peduncle, 1-5 heads appearing from a leaf axil. Calyx c. 0.2mm long. Corolla 1.5-2.3mm long, the petals joined for more than $\frac{1}{2}$ their length, almost colourless. Stamens 4, the 0.3mm anthers borne on c. 8mm pink filaments.

Pod 9-20mm long, 3-5mm wide, flattened, the upper and lower margins indented between each seed, the margins provided with coarse, spreading 2-3mm bristles, dark brown and breaking up when ripe, containing 2-4 seeds. Seeds c. 3mm

long, pear-shaped, flattened, dark red-brown to almost black, the surface finely granular.

Distribution: Co., Mo., N.K., P.C., S.K., W.B. Also N.T. Probably originally from South America but now pan-tropical. Moist situations.

Notes: A weed of disturbed areas and heavily grazed pastures in the wet tropics. Palatable to stock, but contains the toxic amino acid mimosine. The roots contain about 19% tannin. Self-pollinating, nodulates.

References: 3, 16, 17, 18, 50, 60, 108, 120, 149, 157, 180, 287, 306.

Mirbelia

Woody shrubs or almost herbaceous, with simple alternate, opposite or irregularly whorled leaves, or leafless. Flowers variously coloured, small to quite large and showy, the bracts and bracteoles small or lacking. Stamens 10, the filaments free. Pod plump, divided longitudinally by a partition, grooved along the top, containing 2-12 seeds. An endemic Australian genus.

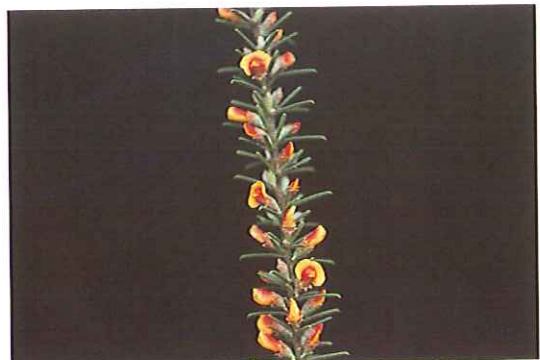
Key to species

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|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Plants leafless | <i>M. viminalis</i> |
| Plants leafy | 2 |
| 2. Leaves 1.5-3mm wide, the upper surface conspicuously reticulate; flowers pink to purple | <i>M. rubiifolia</i> |
| Leaves c. 1mm wide, the upper surface not conspicuously reticulate | 3 |
| 3. Flowers in short dense racemes, terminal or in upper leaf axils; ovules 2; flowers orange | <i>M. confertiflora</i> |
| Flowers single or several in leaf axils | 4 |
| 4. Calyx lobes as long as the tube; ovules 10-12; flowers bluish purple | <i>M. speciosa</i> |
| Calyx lobes shorter than the tube; ovules 2 or 4; flowers yellow and dark red | 5 |
| 5. Leaves with a straight sharp point; ovules 4 | <i>M. pungens</i> |
| Leaves with a hooked point; ovules 2 | <i>M. aotoides</i> |

Mirbelia aotoides

Rigid erect or spreading shrub to c. 1.5m tall. Young stems densely covered with short more or less adpressed white hairs. Stipules lacking. Leaves alternate or irregularly whorled. Petiole less than 1mm long. Leaf blade 5-18mm long, c. 1mm wide, the margins parallel and downward-rolled, ending in a downward-hooked point, sparsely and indistinctly covered with short hairs and with minute warty tubercles on the upper surface.

Flowers showy, single or several in leaf axils, almost sessile, lacking bracteoles. Calyx c. 4mm long, densely covered with minute adpressed hairs, the two dorsal sepals totally fused and together almost square across the tip, the sepals



Mirbelia aotoides, Durong, 26°27'S, 151°09'E.

otherwise joined for c. $\frac{5}{8}$ their length, the teeth broadly triangular. Standard c. 5mm tall, 10mm