

# JOURNAL of the ADELAIDE BOTANIC GARDENS

AN OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL FOR AUSTRALIAN SYSTEMATIC BOTANY

[flora.sa.gov.au/jabg](http://flora.sa.gov.au/jabg)

Published by the

**STATE HERBARIUM OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

on behalf of the

**BOARD OF THE BOTANIC GARDENS AND STATE HERBARIUM**

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Adelaide, South Australia

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## "CLARET ASH" *FRAXINUS OXYCARPA* BIEB. EX WILLD. CV. RAYWOOD: ITS ORIGIN IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Bean (1973) places the Australian ash cv. Raywood under the binomial *Fraxinus oxycarpa* Bieb. ex Willd. (syn. *F. angustifolia* Vahl ssp. *oxycarpa* (Bieb. ex Willd.) Franco & Rocha Afonso). There is also the comment that after its origin in Australia, cv. Raywood was introduced into commerce in Britain by Messrs. Notcutt of Woodbridge, Suffolk soon after 1925 when they received bud-wood. They used the name *F. excelsior* L. var *raywoodii* Hort., but also donated this cultivar to Kew in 1928 as *F. excelsior* L. var. *wollastonii* Hort. The brown winter buds and leaves of cv. Raywood suggest that it is *F. oxycarpa* and not *F. excelsior* which, as is well known, has black winter buds. In *Flora Europaea* 3: 54 (1972), *F. oxycarpa* is treated as a subspecies of *F. angustifolia* with the synonyms *F. pojarkoviana* V. Vassil., and *F. syriaca* sensu Hayek, non Boiss.

My colleague, Mr. D. Francis, has drawn my attention to a letter written by Mr. E. Stirling Booth to the Director of the Melbourne Botanic Garden, Mr. A. W. Jessep on March 12, 1949, and in which details of the origin of cv. Raywood are given. "Claret Ash" is now a well known tree in places like Adelaide and Canberra so that its origin is worth recording.

About the year 1910, Mr. T. C. Wollaston noticed and purchased a plum-coloured foliage form of ash amongst a row of seedlings reputed to have been of Austrian origin, but also reputed to have contained plants of the North American species *F. nigra* Marsh. These plants were growing in Sewell's Nursery at Aldgate in the Adelaide Hills, the nursery now being owned by Messrs. Kemp. Wollaston himself owned the Ray Nursery adjacent to his property called 'Raywood' near Bridgewater where the original tree was planted in 1910 by his gardener, Mr. J. Gates. Stirling Booth spoke to Gates on March 12, and the gardener stated that he had not seen fruits on the tree in his time. In 1949 the original tree was 40 feet high, standing to the west of the house in the property renamed 'Arbury Park' by its new owner Mr. A. R. Downer, onetime Australian High Commissioner to Britain. A number of daughter plants had also by this time become established, the first having been grafted by Gates onto *F. ornus* L. and being about the same size as the original tree, others planted in a row and having been budded onto *F. excelsior* by Gates. Mr. Downer's property is now used by the South Australian Education Department as a conference centre. Most of the early material of cv. Raywood was distributed from the Ray Nursery which was closed in the 1940's.

The appearance of purple autumnal tints in the cultivar, presumably by mutation, either with or without attendant hybridisation, is understandable because it is not unique in the genus. Bean (1929) quotes Sargent as saying that *F. longicuspis* Siebold & Zuccarini from Japan has foliage which in autumn changes to a purple colour, but whether he referred to the apetalous type, or the petalous plants now referred to *F. sieboldiana* Blume, (Ohwi, 1965), cannot be said. Rehder (1960) also includes *F. americana* L. as having yellow or purple autumnal tints, depending on physiological conditions, while *F. americana* L. forma *iodocarpa* Fern. from N. America, and *F. mariesii* Hk.f. from C. China, both have purple coloured fruits.

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