

Cotton Tree / Cowtucker Beach Hibiscus / Coast Cottonwood



FAMILY: *Malvaceae*

HABIT: A small to medium spreading tree of the seashore and saline estuaries. It often has low interlaced branches which form a barrier to the beach.

LEAVES: Long-stalked, broadly heart-shaped, about 16 x 18cm, palmately veined, dark green above and greyish beneath due to a covering of light-coloured star-hairs.

FLOWER/FRUIT: The large yellow, five petalled flowers with maroon centers, usually turn reddish before falling. They are followed by hairy, five valved rosella-like capsules, about 2cm in diameter, enclosed within persistent calyx lobes and containing numerous small dark, wedge shaped seeds. Fruit not edible.

PROPAGATION: From seed.

SEASON: February to October.

LOCAL HABITAT: Shorelines, mangrove edges, tidal streams and brackish swamps.

DISTRIBUTION: Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales south to Port Macquarie. Also South East Asia.

GENERAL: A useful tree for beachside plantings as it is salt spray tolerant and may be pruned to shape. The close-grained timber is easily worked and takes a good polish.

REFERENCES: Alcock & Champion, 1989 *One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay*.