

SARATOGA HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

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Eucalyptus nicholii, willow-leaved peppermint

Usually called willow-leaved peppermint, Eucalyptus nicholii has several other common names, Nichol's willow-leaved peppermint, small-leaved peppermint (Trees for N.S.W.), black peppermint and narrow-leaved black peppermint. The name peppermint places it with a small rough-barked group in which the bark is sub-fibrous but not stringy and furrowed as the stringybarks. The fibrous bark, often a little loose on the outer layers has small fibrous sheets which can be pulled off by the fingers. The outermost branches usually have a smooth bark.

The species name commemorates Richard Nichol (1866-1947) who was born in Ireland, came to Australia as a young man and worked in the Herbarium of the Sydney Botanic Gardens from 1888 until retiring in 1947. During part of those years he was private secretary to J.H. Maiden who contributed so greatly to knowledge of the Eucalyptus.

Eucalyptus nicholii, one of the most attractive rough-barked eucalypts, is a small to medium sized tree and often reaches 10 m. (40 ft.) or sometimes more. It is graceful and willow-like in habit with an upright trunk and spreading crown. The narrow leaves, 2-5 cm. (3/4 to 2 in.) long and 2-5 mm. (1/16 to 3/16 in.) wide, are gray-green with a pink tinge when young. The umbels are mostly 7-flowered, on a slender stalk 8-10 mm. (1/4 to 3/8 in.). The conical buds are on short stalks.

The small flowers have white stamens. Capsules about 5 mm. (3/16 in.) across have 3 valves scarcely exerted. The distinguishing features of this eucalypt are its rough bark, gray-green slender leaves, small conical buds, small creamy-white flowers in umbels of 7, small rounded capsule almost flat at its apex except for the shortly exerted valves.

Nichol's willow-leaved peppermint grows naturally in the New England section of northern New South Wales, and southeastern Queensland. It usually occurs in rocky situations at higher elevations of the mountains or tableland in "rather poor country", on "shallow soils overlying slates" (Kelly, Eucalypts, p. 109). In New South Wales it is a popular small tree for roadside, avenue and park planting, and has been planted extensively in the Armidale area (where it is native) as an ornamental and shelter tree. It will grow on a wide range of good to poor soils, reacts adversely to high pH, and is frost hardy and drought-resistant. In Australia it has also been grown in Canberra where "it is a graceful tree when well grown and,

provided it is shaped a little when young, gives promise of being a useful tree". It is a recent introduction into California. Saratoga Horticultural Foundation received it first in 1951 from Max Watson. It is being used in California as a garden and street tree.