

Logania albiflora



In recent weeks we have enjoyed *Osmanthus fragrans*, a rather unremarkable shrub from China with a redeeming feature — an intense, intoxicating fragrance. We are reminded that we have our own delightfully fragrant shrub, *Logania albiflora*, that is not uncommon in Sydney bushlands, including the woodlands on sandstones of Lane Cove National Park that adjoin Macquarie University. Like *Osmanthus fragrans*, it is a shrub that is easily overlooked, and its small, white flowers can't compete with the pinks, mauves and whites of *Boronia*, *Phebalium*, *Eriostemon* and *Crocea* that flower at the same time. But its heady scent is memorable.

Logania is widespread, from north-eastern Victoria through New South Wales to south-eastern Queensland. So it is all the more surprising that it is relatively unknown. There are about 23 species of *Logania*, 22 of these are endemic to Australia and a little known (and probably extinct) species, *L. depressa*, is native to New Zealand. The biogeography of the genus is of interest: six species occur only on the western side of the Nullarbor Plain and several are restricted to the east.



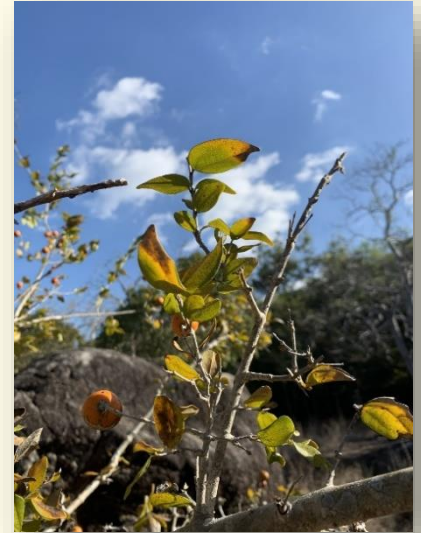
Logania albiflora in Australia.



Mitrasacme polymorpha

The family Loganiaceae seems to be a grab bag of odd plants, including fragile, white flowered *Mitrasacme* (also on Sydney sandstones), through to trees of strychnine-producing *Strychnos*. It is described as a family of trees, shrubs and lianas, including ~ 15 genera and about 350 species, most of which

occur in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and just a few in temperate regions. Countless revisions and iterations have seen the number of genera change significantly, from a single genus to thirty. The Atlas of Living Australia states: *there are not any great morphological characteristics to distinguish these (Loganiaceae) taxa from others in the order Gentianales*. So it's probably not surprising our lovely, fragrant local species is not better known when so much confusion reigns about its relatives!



Strychnos in far north Queensland
Photo: Karen Marais

Alison Downing, Brian Atwell, Robert Kooyman,
Karen Marais, Kevin Downing

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- Distribution map modified from Atlas of Living Australia:
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