

Plant of the Week

*Syncarpia  
glomulifera*  
Turpentine

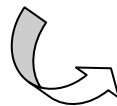


The Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) could scarcely be considered the “pick of the litter” when compared to its colourful relatives (Bottlebrush, Tea Tree, Eucalypts, Lilly Pillies) in the plant family **Myrtaceae**. In spite of its unloveable appearance, this ugly duckling is one of the most useful trees found in Australia. The name *Syncarpia* comes from the Greek “syn” – together (ie. fused) and “καρπός” or “karpós” – fruit, a reference to the capsules which are fused into hard, woody balls in contrast to, for example, the individual woody fruits of Eucalypts. The hard, durable timber with high silica content is termite and borer resistant and is prized for marine pilings, wharves, jetties, railway sleepers, mines, house framing, flooring and decking<sup>2</sup>. Turpentines grow along the NSW and Queensland coast and ranges, on clay/shale soils, often on ridge tops or along valleys, fertile locations prized for agricultural use and urban development. This has led to a need to conserve surviving areas within the Sydney Basin Bioregion and now Sydney turpentine-ironbark forest has been recognized as an **Endangered ecological community** under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to protecting STIF within its boundaries, Hornsby Shire Council has also planted Turpentines as street trees. Council officers might be astonished to find that trees they expected to look like this:



have been trimmed by local residents, in an attack of neatness, to look like this:



<sup>1</sup> Office of Environment and Heritage:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/determinations/SydneyTurpentineIronbarkForestEndComListing.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Wood Solutions: <http://www.woodsolutions.com.au/Wood-Species/turpentine>

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