Bouddi Wattles Guide

Wattle day is 1st September but here on the Central Coast that seems a bit late. With over 1000 Wattle species occupying diverse habitats throughout the continent, they are the biggest plant group in Australia. Most are shrubs or small trees and the name 'wattle' comes from their use by colonists in 'wattling' or lacing branches together to form the walls of 'wattle and mud-daubed' houses.

Known scientifically as Acacias, Wattles belong to that super-family of nitrogen-fixing plants, the Legumes. Their ability to take in nitrogen from the air makes wattles well suited to poor soils and they are typically good at colonising disturbed places. Unfortunately it also makes them successful weeds, for example *Acacia saligna* the Golden Wreath Wattle from Western Australia is an invasive weed both overseas and here on the East Coast. The Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnantha,* Australia's floral emblem, is endemic to areas further south but like many wattles that producing dramatic displays of yellow flowers, it has escaped from gardens and is now 'naturalised' on the Central Coast.

With so many 'garden escapes' the identification of local wattles can be confusing. This guide is an attempt to describe those species that are native to the Bouddi Peninsula.

Identification.

Wattles are instantly recognised by their yellow blossoms. Each flower is dominated by a fluffy mass of yellow pollen producing stamens. How these flowers are arranged in an inflorescence is an important step in identifying the species. They can either be arranged around a long axis to form a cylindrical head, or around an end point to form a globular cluster.

The leaf is another feature that aids identification. Wattles have large, complex bipinnate leaves made up of feather-like pinnae arranged in pairs along a central stem. Each pinnae is made up of numerous leaflets (pinnules) arranged either side of a secondary stem.

Through evolution in a hot, dry land, most Wattles have lost their **bipinnate leaves** and replaced them with a simpler expanded leaf stem called a **phyllode** that is more resistant to water loss.

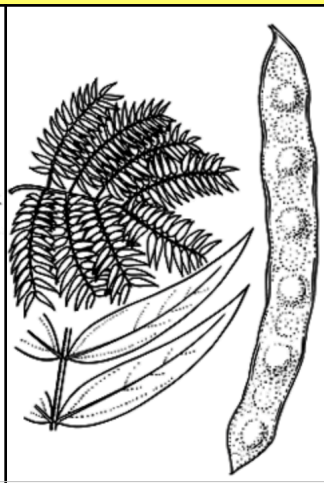
The Acacia species described in this guide are those recorded for Bouddi NP in the Bionet Atlas of NSW Wildlife. Garden escapes are unlikely to be included. The identity of these and other species can be confirmed by referencing 'Native Plants of the Sydney District' by Fairley and Moore, or 'Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney' by Les Robinson. An excellent interactive tool can be found online by searching for 'Lucid keys to acacias of Australia' (http://keys.lucidcentral.org/keys/v3/wattle2/).

Prepared by the Killcare Wagstaffe Trust, 2018

Wattles with Bipinnate Leaves

Pepper-tree Wattle
Acacia schinoides
Small tree with smooth bark. Drooping leaf with broad leaflets about 4mm x 12mm. Pale flowers on globular heads in summer

Acacia irrorata
Shapely tree, leaflets very fine 1mm x 3mm. Leaf branches stiff with rough ridges. Flowers pale yellow in summer. ***A.decurrens*** has bright yellow flowers in autumn



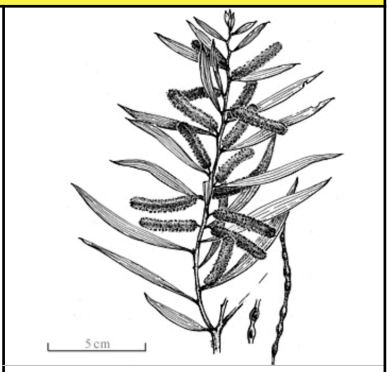
Cedar Wattle
Acacia elata
Tree to 20m. Leaflets to 5cm long, paler on underside. Leaves 35cm long. Pale flowers on globular heads in late summer

Sunshine Wattle
Acacia terminalis
A shrub to about 1.5m. Leaflets 2mm x 10mm, paler on undersurface. Masses of bright yellow flowers autumn - winter.

Phyllodes + Flowers in Cylindrical Heads

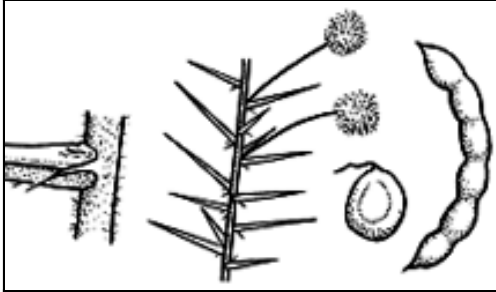
Sydney Golden Wattle
A longifolia and sophorae
The bright yellow flower spikes appear from late winter into spring. Phyllodes have 2-3 distinct parallel veins and dimensions vary considerably (5-20cm long, 4-20mm wide.) Subspecies 'sophorae' is a much lower shrub growing on the dunes where it plays an important role in stabilising sand. Its phyllodes are shorter and wider.

Maidens Wattle
Acacia maidenii
A small tree with long (20cm), narrow (1cm), curved phyllodes that have no distinct veins. It grows on rainforest margins.The pale yellow flower spikes appear in late summer. Pods are very twisted.

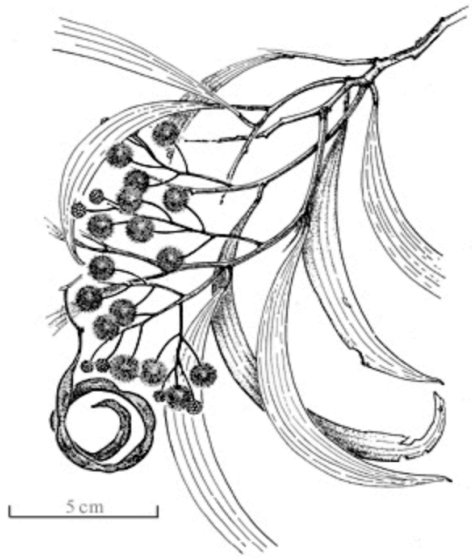


Sally Wattle
Acacia floribunda
A large dense shrub with graceful, pendulous branches. An abundance of pale yellow flowers appear July-Sept. Phyllodes long and narrow (5-15cm x 2-10mm). Pods straight.
A. longissima is similar but phyllodes longer to 30cm

Phyllodes + Flowers in Globular Heads



Prickly Moses ***Acacia ulicifolia***
A common shrub to about 1.5m in dry heaths and woodlands. Pale cream flowers in winter. Sharp pointed phyllodes about 1cm long. Young branches hairy. **A.** ***brownii*** is similar but has deep yellow flowers and is only sparsely hairy.
A. quadrilateralis is rare in Bouddi but found on the sandy soils of Bombi Moor. The needle-like phyllodes are square in cross-section (hence the name) and up to 7cm long. Pale cream flowers appear from August to October



Hickory ***Acacia implexa***
A small tree to 10m. Phyllodes very variable 6-25mm x 7-18cm. Pods very twisted. Pale yellow flowers.
Blackwood ***A. melanoxylon*** similar but phyllodes slightly shorter & broader.

Myrtle Wattle ***Acacia myrtifolia***
A common, shrub growing to less than 1m. Red tinged branches. Pale yellow flowers in winter. Phyllodes thick 2-5cm. Pod up to 7cm long

Sweet Wattle
Acacia suaveolens
A slim, erect shrub to 1.5m. Pale yellow flowers in winter Phyllodes blue-green, narrow 7mm x 12cm.
A. linifolia is a small slender shrub, phyllodes short, narrow 2mm x 3cm. Pale flowers in summer.