

Monday, September 4, 2023

Brachychiton acerifolius

Scientific name: *Brachychiton acerifolius* (A.Cunn. ex G.Don) F.Muell.

Family: *Malvaceae*

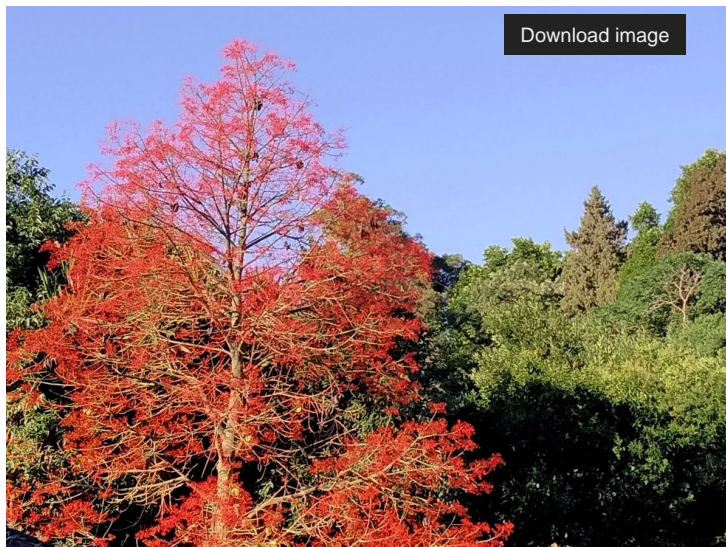
Common name: Illawarra Flame Tree

One of the most outstanding blooms is that of the red brachycephalus, also known as the fire tree or tree of flames; there are several species of trees that receive these common names, and it is usually because their flowering is intense and showy, but few like the one in the present case.

It is a deciduous tree, which is bare for a short winter period. In May, before the leaves come out, it is covered with clusters of small bell-shaped flowers with one of the strongest and brightest reds imaginable; the flowering usually lasts until July. The trunk is straight and the crown is pyramidal, reaching a height of about 15 m when grown outside its area of origin. The leaves are large, up to 20 cm, with between 5 and 7 lobes in juveniles; in adults they are leathery, entire or with 3 lobes. The fruits are also eye-catching, capsules with yellow seeds. Its natural range is the subtropical areas of eastern Australia, between Queensland and New South Wales.

The name comes from the Greek, *brachys* meaning short, and *chiton* tunic, which is thought to allude to a short hair covering the fruits and seeds. In Latin *folium* means leaf, so its specific name refers to the fact that the leaves are very similar to those of some species of maples.

It is long-lived, undemanding and fast-growing. It is used as an ornamental, and the Australian aborigines eat its roasted seeds. In La Concepción it can be seen in the car park at the end of the hibiscus walk.



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