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## Feature photograph

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## Feature photograph



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## Ochrosia borbonica J. F. Gmel, Apocynaceae

The genus consists of 23 species with habitats in Australia, Indian Ocean islands, South Asia and Oceania. Indole alkaloids are known in the genus, especially ellipticine. Medicinal activities include antipyretic, diuretic, purgative, bitter tonic and carminative; applications reported are for leukaemia, swellings, anaemia, antidote for poisonous fish etc.

Tree 3-15 m in height, with dark grey fissured bark. Leaves blade oboval or elliptic, 14x3 cm, rounded to acute at the summit. Inflorescences terminal, with long peduncles. Flowers 5-merous, scented, shortly pedicellate or sessile. Fruit a drupe with fibrous mesocarp. Seeds 1-3 per carpel, flat, elliptic.

The leaves are reported to contain alkaloids, sterols and terpenes. The main alkaloid isolated from the plant is methoxy ellipticine. Methoxy ellipticine inhibits the synthesis of DNA and RNA and their respective proteins. It has also proved to be active in the treatment of acute myeloblastic leukaemia. However, methoxy ellipticine has been reported to have significant side-effects.