

Alphitonia excelsa
(Rhamnaceae)

- Common name:** Red ash.
- Localities:** Widespread.
- Growth form:** An open tree to 18 m tall.
- Foliage:** Leaves are simple, dark green above, white below, up to 13 cm long and 5 cm wide.
- Flowers and fruit:** Tiny cream flowers are borne in small, axillary, brownish panicles, which mostly appear in autumn. They are scented in the evenings. The fruit is small and blackish.
- Habitat:** Common in our area, in dry rainforest and open eucalypt forest.
- Propagation and Management:** May be propagated from cuttings or seeds, which may be sown fresh. Fast growing and very hardy, once established. Red ash is tolerant of frost.
- General:** Worth including when replanting eucalypt woodland. Leaves tend to be subject to insect attack. Red ash is a host plant to various butterflies, including the green-banded blue and the berries are eaten by king parrots, fig birds and orioles. Extracts from leaves were used for curing headaches or sore eyes and from the bark as a tonic for curing upset stomachs. The timber is useful for woodwork. Also known as soap tree, as the leaves can be used for washing, even for dishes!

