

February 2026

# Plant of the month

## Ivory Curl Tree



**Common Name:** Ivory Curl Tree or Spotted Silky Oak  
**Scientific Name:** *Buckinghamia celisissima*  
**Family:** Proteaceae  
**Genus:** *Buckinghamia*: named after Richard Greville 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Buckingham 1823-1889  
**Species epithet:** *Celisissima* is from the Latin *celsus*, meaning "tall", "proud" or "noble", combined with the suffix *-issimus*, meaning "very"



### About

First described in 1868 by German-born Australian botanist Ferdinand von Mueller, based on material collected by John Dallachy near Rockingham Bay in 1865.

This is one of two species in the genus *Buckinghamia*. The other species *Buckinghamia ferruginiflora* or Noah's Oak is a rarer rainforest tree from far north Queensland. Both flowers and fruit are similar to those of *Grevillea*, to which this tree is related.

The Ivory Curl Tree is a host species for larvae of the Cornelian butterfly. Its flowers attract a variety of insects to the inflorescences, among them the beetle *Dilochrosis brownii*, which in turn attracts insectivorous birds. The seeds are eaten by crimson rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*).

This native evergreen tree has a dense lush green rounded canopy. New leaf growth has a bronze tinge and provides great privacy and is an excellent small shade tree.

Tolerates a wide range of soils benefitting from good drainage with plenty of organic matter mixed in. Plant in full sun to part shade and maintain moisture levels until well established, becoming quite dry tolerant.



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### Native Habitat

Dry and wet rainforests, growing on volcanic soils.

### Distribution

North-east Queensland: Rossville to Paluma Range, north of Townsville, at altitudes 200m to 1000m.

### Description

In its natural habitat, can grow to 30m emerging through canopy to reach sunlight needed for flowering. In cultivation, can grow up to 8m in warmer regions but decreasing in height in cooler climates.

### Flowers

Long pendant spikes to 27cm; the long, cream coloured, spidery flowers are produced on the ends of branches from December to March. The robust showy flowers are sweet smelling and full of nectar which attracts birds, bees, butterflies and huge plumes of other insects.

### Fruit

The ovary of each flower develops into a follicle which, when mature, slits open along one side, dehisces (dries), to release up to six small brown seeds

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