

## Plants which Produce Inflammation or Irritation of the Skin.\*

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A LADY student in the Agricultural School at the University drew my attention to what is known as "brigalow itch" in the Moree district. Brigalow is a wattle, with the botanical name of *Acacia harpophylla*, and it is illustrated and described in Part 34 of my "Forest Flora of New South Wales."

The Chief Inspector of Stock informed me that the Inspector of Stock at Moree advised him as follows:—

I do not know anything of the brigalow itch personally, but I have been informed by old hands that when ringing the brigalow, a fine powder, thought to come from the bark of the tree, caused an itching and irritated the skin, which would break out in eruption. The powder is described as very fine and yellow in colour.

Reference to the Forestry Commission has brought a number of interesting reports, some of which, although they are not evidence in regard to brigalow, form an interesting supplement to our knowledge regarding the connection between plants and skin irritation:—

*Dubbo.*—Nothing is known of brigalow itch, but many timber-workers, where there is no brigalow, are troubled with an itch. An insect (locally known as "giggles") in the Bogan River, causes an itch.

*Forbes.*—Nothing is known of brigalow itch, but a hairy grub which attacks myall trees (*Acacia pendula*) leaves behind a large bag which when disturbed exudes a fine dust, which on coming into contact with the body causes an intense irritation.

*Deniliquin.*—Brigalow does not grow in this district, but an itch is known to have been caused by the brown dust blown from the cocoons of the bag moth on myall (*Acacia pendula*) and yarran (*Acacia homalophylla*) trees. An itch very common in the red-gum (*Eucalyptus rostrata*) forests is caused by the decayed cocoon (of a moth) which is often under the loose bark on the gum trees. When this dust comes into contact with a man's body it causes a most tormenting itch which is almost unbearable, but it only appears to take effect when the body is heated.

*Narrabri.*—An itch commonly called brigalow itch has been prevalent in this district for some time past, but people have been known to suffer from it who had never even seen a brigalow. In brigalow country, especially in wet weather, the itch is bad, and would appear to have been caused by the tree. It does not last long, and one is rid of it next day. Dr. Park, of Narrabri, informed the District Forester that he has had a number of cases of various forms of "dermatitis", but solely from men who had been cutting pine (*Callitris*) whilst the trees were laden with pollen, or who had been cutting Noogoora burr (*Xanthium strumarium*) [see this *Gazette* for 1899, p. 1043]. Dr. Park was of the opinion that these men were affected by the burr and the pine, as the symptoms recurred when they went back to work. He also noticed that only persons inclined towards eczema and persons with very tender skins were so affected, and that he had known many men employed in ringbarking and working among brigalow at all seasons and in all weathers who never felt any ill effects. The District Forester states that after rain there is always a most unpleasant odour hanging around the brigalow scrub which can be best described by likening it to the scent left by a fox.

\* Previous references:—June, 1920; May, 1918; March, 1916.