Feifei
Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Feifei…

Rob
And I'm Rob. Hello. Errr, Feifei, you're looking a bit angry.

Feifei
Me, angry! I am angry.

Rob
Oh no, what's the problem?

Feifei
I think you know Rob. Somebody told the boss that I spilt coffee over his computer yesterday – and now he's angry with me.

Rob
Oh no. What kind of mean and horrible person would try and get you into trouble?

Feifei
You and the boss were the only people left in the office last night. Hmmm?

Rob
Whoa – hold on Feifei. If you are implying it was me who told the boss, then you are barking up the wrong tree.

Feifei
Please don't make me any angrier by saying that I am like a dog!

Rob
No, no Feifei. Just calm down. I should be angry because you are making the wrong assumption about who told the boss, OK? That's what I mean by barking up the wrong tree – you want to blame someone but you got the wrong person. I didn't even know you had done it.
Feifei
OK, I'm sorry. So the phrase 'barking up the wrong tree' means making the wrong assumption when trying to achieve something. Shall we hear some examples while I make you a coffee to say sorry…?

Examples
If you think I have enough spare cash to pay for your holiday, then you're barking up the wrong tree.

You're barking up the wrong tree if you think I was the one who said you were leaving. It wasn't me!

You're barking up the wrong tree if you think I'm going to lend you my car. I've seen how you drive!

Feifei
You're listening to The English We Speak. We're talking about the phrase 'barking up the wrong tree'. It means to make a wrong assumption about someone or something.

Rob
The phrase can also mean doing something in a way that will not work – you're basically wasting your time. Like a detective trying to solve a crime by obviously arresting the wrong man – he's barking up the wrong tree.

Feifei
Ok Rob understood – and here's your coffee to say sorry for barking up the wrong tree.

Rob
Thanks – make sure you don't spill it this time. The boss would be really angry! (ANGRY DOG GROWL!) …what did I say?

Feifei
If I find out you did tell the boss, I'll make sure to bark up the right tree, OK?

Rob
Oh Feifei, I hope your bark is worse than your bite. Bye.

Feifei
Bye