



The Wallum Banksia is August's plant of the month.

Common name:

Wallum Banksia

Botanical name:

Banksia aemula

Family:

Proteaceae

Distribution:

The Wallum Banksia can be found along the east coast of Australia, ranging from central Queensland to its southern limit at La Perouse in Sydney.

Native Habitat: Usually grows in coastal, seasonally wet, sandy soils, also in dry woodland or tall shrub land.

Description

A chunky large shrub with serrated leaves, knobby orange bark and spectacular pale greenish-yellow flowers that usually come out in autumn. The flower spike is made of many flowers but only a small number of these produce seeds. Large, grey, seed bearing follicles appear on the woody "cone". The new growth is covered in rust covered hairs.

Plant Information

The name 'Wallum' originates from the Aboriginal term for the species. Banksias were named after the British botanist, Sir Joseph Banks who first arrived with Captain Cook to the area that is now called Botany Bay.

This plant has important functions in the environment. The flowers provide food for many small marsupials, birds and insects. After bushfire, Banksias can regrow from an area at the woody base of the trunk, called a lignotuber. *Banksias* have evolved to grow on nutrient poor white sands like those still found in parts of the Parklands.

Banksias and other members of the Proteaceae family can be killed by high levels of phosphorus that can come from fertilisers and dog poo.

Banksia aemula is a component of *Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub* - a Critically Endangered Ecological Community at NSW and Commonwealth level.

Uses

People have used banksias for a long time. Aboriginal people used banksias for making a sweet drink and as a portable source of fire. *Banksia aemula* was one of the first banksias to be cultivated in England in the late 1700s.

Where to see the Wallum Banksia in Centennial Parklands

Bird Sanctuary, SW paddock and Queens Park.

