

Plant of the Month - January

by Allan Carr

Xyris complanata

Feathered Yellow-eye
XYRIDACEAE

Pronunciation: ZY-ris com-plan-ART-a

Derivation: *Xyris*, from the Greek, *xyris* – cutting knife, shears (referring to the sword-shaped leaves; also an older form of the word iris, from the genus, *Iris*); *complanata*, from the Latin, *complanare* – flattened, compressed.



Leaves



Flower, fruits



Habit

Xyris is a temperate and tropical genus of around 250 species, with about 25 of these occurring in Australia, most of them in WA. They are mostly tufted plants found in moist or water-logged sandy soils such as wallum heathlands in Qld and NSW.

Description: *X. complanata* is a small tufted grass-like herb to 65 cm of moist sandy soils. It has fibrous roots and leaves crowded at the base. Found from south of Sydney to north Qld and across the tropics to south of Broome in WA.

Leaves to 300 mm x 4 mm are flat and sometimes twisted with basal sheaths to 70 mm long.

Flowers are *bisexual on distinctly flattened *scapes to 65 cm x 3 mm, bright yellow, three-petalled to 15 mm across and appear mostly from September to May. Flowers last only one or two days but a succession of flowers open on the following days giving the plant an extended flowering period.

Fruits are knobby columns of 5 mm capsules arranged vertically to 25 mm long at the tops of the flower stalks with tiny seeds to 0.5 mm long.

X. juncea (Little Yellow-eye) is very similar but has shorter, smooth, nearly *terete leaves and knobby fruit capsules not arranged in vertical columns up to 8 mm long. Species name, *juncea* from the Latin, *juncus* – rush, because this plant is rush-like.

*scape = the stem-like flowering stalk of a plant with leaves clustered at the base

*bisexual = having male and female parts in the one flower

*terete = cylindrical, circular in cross-section



Habit (*X. juncea*)