

## Plant of the Month - February

by Allan Carr

### *Acacia penninervis*

**Pronunciation:** a-KAY-sha pen-ee-NER-vis

### Hickory Wattle

MIMOSACEAE

**Derivation:** *Acacia*, from the Greek, *akakia* from *akazo* – to sharpen, referring to the prickly nature of the first species discovered; *penninervis*, from the Latin, *penna* – a feather and *nervus* – a sinew or nerve. (The leaf nerves or veins have a feather-like appearance.)

Common name refers to the similarity of the wood to that of American Hickory (*Carya* sp.)



Phyllodes, gland



Flowers



Fruits, seed

*Acacia*, the largest Australian plant genus has about 955 species throughout the continent. For information about the term 'wattle' see Plant of the Month, August 2013 or June 2014.

**Description:** *A. penninervis* is a tree to 8 m, but is often a much smaller shrub, in deep sands in the understorey of eucalypt forests. It has greyish, furrowed bark and cylindrical branchlets. Found from Bundaberg and Burnett Region, Qld south to near Grafton, NSW. It was first collected by Amalie Deitrich while near the Brisbane River during 1863-65.

Recent taxonomic research suggested that the old *Acacia* genus of about 1350 species worldwide should be split into several genera, a controversial move due to the type species being African and so Australia would lose the *Acacia* genus. After much earlier debate the International Botanical Congress of 2005 in Vienna ratified retention of the name *Acacia* for the Australian species. To do this *A. penninervis* became the type species for *Acacia*.

**Phyllodes** to 150 mm x 40 mm are somewhat leathery, dark green and slightly curved. They have a prominent light green mid-vein, obvious marginal veins and finer parallel side veins giving a feather-like appearance. On the upper side near the base of the phyllode is often a short conspicuous vein ending at a small volcano-like gland. Phyllode length and breadth vary greatly and the stalk is sometimes hairy.

\***Inflorescences** consist of flower-heads that are creamy globular clusters of 20 to 30 flowers in axillary racemes to 100 mm long at almost any time of the year but mostly from September to May. Each yellow bud right = a single flower.

**Fruits** to 200 mm x 17 mm are straight, or slightly curved, flat, brown pods with bumps over the shiny, black seeds.

\*inflorescence = the arrangement in which flowers are borne on a plant



Various flower stages