

Plant of the Month - May

by Allan Carr

Zieria minutiflora

Twiggy Zieria
RUTACEAE

Pronunciation: ZEER-ee-a my-new-te-FLOR-a

Derivation: *Ziera*, after Johannis Zier, 18th-century Polish botanist. Sir James E. Smith described and named the genus in memory of his friend 'Jan' Zier, who died in London in 1796; *minutiflora*, from the Latin, *minutus* – small or paltry and *flos, floris* – a flower (insignificant flowers).



Trifoliate leaves, flowers



Leaves, flowers, fruits

Zieria is a genus of about 60 species and all are confined to Australia except *Z. chevalieri* which occurs in New Caledonia. 35 of these are found in eastern Queensland.

Description: *Z. minutiflora* is a small, erect, twiggy shrub to about 50 cm with hairy stems. It is found in open forests and woodlands from north-eastern Queensland to Coff's Harbour in north-eastern New South Wales on sandy or rocky coastal areas such as Lagoon Creek and Mount Ngungun where these photos were taken.

Leaves are opposite and trifoliate with *obovate leaflets to 15 mm x 9 mm. and they are green above and sparsely hairy below. Leaf margins are *entire and can be recurved as seen here and with a blunt or notched apex. On some plants the leaves are strongly aromatic when crushed. (Some *Zieria* species contain toxic compounds.)

Flowers are small and white in *axillary clusters to 2 or 3 mm across. Some can be pale pink. These flowers have 4 petals and 4 stamens and flowering occurs mainly from November to May. Many insects visit the flowers for nectar which has a sweet honey fragrance.

Fruits up to 2.5 mm are dry capsules with 4 two-valved segments. Propagation from seeds can be unreliable. In common with many other Rutaceous plants cuttings give better results.

*obovate = inversely ovate (upside down egg shaped); wider at tip like an egg upside down

*entire = free from irregularities (such as tooth shapes)

*axillary = arising from the angle between leaf and stem

Habit

