

Plant of the Month - June

by Allan Carr

Acacia suaveolens

Sweet Wattle

Pronunciation: a-KAY-sha swa-vee-OH-lens

MIMOSACEAE

Derivation: *Acacia*, from the Greek, *akis* – a sharp point, referring to the prickly nature of the first species discovered; *suaveolens*, from the Latin, *suavis* – sweet, *oleo* – to smell.



Habit



Flowers



Fruits, phyllodes

The genus *Acacia* is the largest genus of flowering plants in Australia with around 955 species that occur throughout the continent in every type of terrestrial habitat.

“The common term ‘wattle’ was used in the expression ‘wattle and daub’ and referred to the combination of interwoven saplings and mud which was utilised by the early settlers in Australia to construct their shelters. The most generally used material was not a wattle but *Callicoma*, an entirely different shrub with wattle-like flowers which was commonly called Black Wattle. The name wattle eventually became associated with the acacias.” (From Simmonds, M. 1981, *Acacias of Australia*, Volume 1, Nelson)

Description: *Acacia suaveolens* is a straggly shrub of about 1-2 metres sparsely branched with flattened angular stems. It is common and widespread in sandy soils of the east coast and tablelands of south Qld, NSW, Vic, Tas., and south-east SA. New growth is often pinkish.

***Phyllodes** are alternate, *glaucous and lance-shaped to 130 mm x 10 mm with nerve-like margins and a central nerve.

Flower-heads are globular in fragrant, creamy-white clusters to 30 mm and usually appear from May to August.

Fruits are bluish, oblong and flat drying to a brown colour, 40 mm x 17 mm containing shiny black seeds attached by a short seed stalk folded several times and thickened into a small oblique *aril.

*phyllode = modified, flattened leaf stalk, looking and acting like a leaf

*glaucous = dull, bluish-green

*aril = a fleshy outgrowth of the stalk of a seed



Globular flower heads