

Plant of the Month - September

by Allan Carr

Persoonia virgata

Pronunciation: per-SOON-ee-a ver-GART-a

Derivation: *Persoonia*, after Dutch mycologist and botanist, Christiaan Hendrik Persoon; *virgata*, from the Latin *virga* – a rod or something long, straight and thin (refers to its twiggy branches).

Wallum Geebung
PROTEACEAE



Habit

There are around 90 species of *Persoonia* all endemic to Australia. They form a significant group of about 10% of the Proteaceae family in Australia and are more common in heathland and dry sclerophyll forests.

Description: *Persoonia virgata* is a medium to tall shrub with smooth, light grey bark. It can grow to around 4 m high and is found on sandy soils from central-eastern Qld to northern NSW. It is not common in gardens, probably because it can be hard to propagate.

Leaves are fine and narrow to 60 mm x 3 mm, alternate, bright green, *concolorous and *glabrous when mature.

Flowers are about 10 mm across, yellow, tubular, have long petal lobes that curl sharply outwards and appear mainly from July to November.

Fruits are olive-shaped drupes that change from green to purple when ripe. They are about 12 mm long, have a flexible spine at the tip and contain a single seed.

Some Aboriginal communities ate the ripe fruits and soaked their twine and nets with the bark to help preserve them. Emus eat the fruits and Swamp Wallabies eat the leaves.



Emu in *Persoonia virgata* habitat

Leaves, flowers, fruits

*concolorous = both surfaces having the same colour

*glabrous = without hairs or scales



Emu dropping with various fruits and seeds