

Plant of the Month - September

by Allan Carr

Sowerbaea juncea

Pronunciation: sow-a-BAY-a JUN-see-a

vanilla lily
LAXMANNIACEAE

Derivation: *Sowerbaea*, after James Sowerby, naturalist, artist and engraver of plates of fungi and flowering plants for many British botanical publications; *juncea*, rush-like foliage, from the Latin, *juncus* – a rush.



Habit showing leaves and flowers



Massed display on land cleared for housing

Sowerbaea, is a genus of five species endemic to Australia, this one is found from Rockhampton, Qld, through coastal NSW and Vic to Tas, one in Nth Qld, one in NT and two in WA.

Description: *S. juncea* is a tufted herb to 50 cm with fibrous roots in moist, sandy heathland. It sometimes produces a showy wildflower display over a large area as seen in the photos above.

Leaves in a basal cluster are *terete, hollow and bluish to 50 cm x 2 mm.

Flowers on long stems to 60 cm are pink to mauve and carried in many-flowered *umbels. From 20 to 40 individual 6-petalled flowers to 10 mm across with a vanilla perfume open in succession from July to February.



Flower detail

Fruits are capsules to 3 mm diameter which contain small hard seeds and are enclosed by the persistent *perianth.



*terete = cylindrical, circular in cross-section

*umbel = an inflorescence where all flower stalks are of equal length and arranged like the spokes of an upturned umbrella

*perianth = the calyx and corolla of a flower, especially where the two are similar (calyx = the sepals of a flower collectively and corolla = the petals of a flower collectively)

Inflorescence (one umbel)