

Plant of the Month - November

by Allan Carr

Xanthorrhoea fulva

Pronunciation: zan-tho-REE-a FULL-va

wallum grass tree
XANTHORRHOEACEAE

Derivation: *Xanthorrhoea*, from the Greek, *xanthos* - yellow and *rhoea* - flowing. (refers to the yellow resin in the type species); *fulva*, from the Latin, *fulvus* - deep yellow.



Flowers, buds + butterfly, bee



Habit, leaves, flowers



Leaves after fire

Xanthorrhoea is a genus of 28 species, endemic in Australia mainly in temperate regions, with a few in the tropics and one species confined to arid Central Australia. These are very special plants providing a dramatic feature of the Australian landscape and often occur in large colonies. They are very slow growing so those with tall stems can be hundreds of years old.

Description: *X fulva* is a trunkless tufted herbaceous plant with a stem that branches underground. They are often in massed groups in damp wallum areas from around Rockhampton, Qld and through coastal NSW as far as Wyong, usually in communities of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and *Banksia robur* on sand plains with high water tables. Many honeyeaters and invertebrates such as the Scarlet Jezebel (*Delias argenthona*) above, feed on their abundant nectar.

Leaves in a basal cluster are long and grass-like, usually bluish-green to 3.5 mm wide and triangular or almost flat in cross-section. Flushes of new leaves such as occur after fire are grazed by kangaroos and wallabies

Flowers are creamy-white and clustered along a *scape up to 60 cm long on a *scape up to 180 cm long and 2 cm diameter. Massed displays can occur from September to November on Bribie Island and at nearby Sandstone Point.

Fruits are multiple seed capsules embedded along the flower spike, each containing one or more dull black seeds.

Aboriginal people used the resin as a component of glue for canoes, tools and weapons and the flower spikes as fire sticks. A sweet drink was made by soaking the flower spikes in water.

*scape = a leafless flower stalk arising from near the ground

*spike = an inflorescence in which the flowers are without a stalk, along an unbranched axis

Developing fruits

