

Plant of the Month - November

by Allan Carr

Lomatia silaifolia

Pronunciation: lo-MAY-tee-a sil-eye-FOAL-ee-a

Derivation: *Lomatia*, from the Greek, *loma* – a fringe or border, because the *funicle forms a border around the seed wing; *silaifolia* meaning ‘with leaves like *Silaum*, meadow saxifrages’ (willow-like).

Crinkle Bush

PROTEACEAE



Habit



Flowers



Leaves



Fruits

The genus *Lomatia* comprises 12 described species. It has a disjunct distribution, with 9 endemic to Australia and 3 in Chile on the western coast of South America which suggests a history dating back to the time when Australia and South America were both part of the supercontinent, Gondwana. There are possibly 2 undescribed species from north Qld. They are all shrubs or small to medium trees. *Lomatia* is allied to *Grevillea*, which differs in having only 2 seeds per *follicle.

Description: *Lomatia silaifolia* is a common open shrub to 2 m often with several stems from ground level. It grows naturally as an understorey plant in open forests and woodlands along the coast and tablelands of southern Qld and NSW from Rockhampton to Jervis Bay. Plants have a basal lignotuber which re-shoots vigorously after fire or major damage.

Leaves are alternate, fern-like, 100 to 300 mm long and 2 to 3 times deeply divided with toothed margins. Their colour is deep green and sometimes *glaucous below. The leaves are extremely variable in the amount of division, the size of the lobes and the degree of glaucousness. They are eaten by Swamp Wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*).

Flowers are white, 15 mm across in branched spikes to 300 mm long and held above the foliage as in the two photos on the left above. These flowers occur throughout the year, often after fire and mainly from December to May. Their nectar is poisonous, cut flowers kept indoors have been reported to attract and kill flies. Positive cyanide reactions have been recorded for the anthers, styles and stigmas.

Fruits are capsules to 50 mm with a beak, brown when mature and splitting to reveal yellowish winged seeds.

*follicle = a fruit capsule formed from a single ovule bearing unit

*funicle = a supporting attachment *glaucous = dull, bluish-green



Individual flowers