

Plant of the Month - March

by Allan Carr

Elaeocarpus reticulatus

Blueberry Ash

Pronunciation: el-ee-o-CAR-pus re-tic-ewe-LAR-tus

ELAEOCARPACEAE

Derivation: *Elaeocarpus*, from the Greek, *elaia* – the olive tree, *karpos*, – fruit (a reference to the apparent similarity of the fruit of some species to olives); *reticulatus*, from the Latin, *reticulatus* – resembling a net (refers to the leaf venation).



Flowers



Habit



Ageing leaf

Elaeocarpus is a large genus of about 200 species worldwide, with 28 species in Australia mostly in the rainforests of north-eastern Queensland.

Description: *E. reticulatus* is a tall shrub or large tree to 10 m tall, common in dry rainforests and coastal scrubs. This is the most widespread member of the genus in Australia, as it extends from Fraser Island in Qld south through NSW and Vic to the Bass Strait Islands of Tas.

Leaves to 130 mm by 30 mm are alternate with margins closely toothed and net-like venation. Old leaves often turn a brilliant red before falling.

Flowers to 10 mm across are white, bell-shaped and fringed. From September to May these are borne on *racemes to 70 mm amongst the foliage. They have a delicate aniseed perfume and can be pink on some plants.

Fruits are bright blue, oval-shaped *drupes to 8 mm, each with one grooved brown stone containing a seed. These stay on the tree for many months, mainly from May to October and are eaten by various birds, including Crimson Rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*), Figbirds (*Sphecotheres viridis*) and Wonga Pigeons (*Leucosarcia melanoleuca*).

The larvae of the Eastern Flat butterfly (*Netrocoryne repanda*) feed on the leaves of this and other species.

*raceme = a flower structure with a single stem bearing flowers on stalks

*drupe = a fruit with a skin over a fleshy layer surrounding a woody stone containing a seed



Fruits