

Plant of the Month - March

by Allan Carr

Gahnia sieberiana

red-fruited saw sedge

Pronunciation: GARN-ee-a SEE-ber-ee-arn-a

CYPERACEAE

Derivation: *Gahnia*, after Henricus Gahn, a Swedish botanist and friend of Linnaeus; *sieberiana*, after Franz Sieber, an Austrian botanist who collected many plant specimens in NSW in 1823.



Habit in Wallum heathland



Leaves, Fruits



Inflorescence, Flowers



Gahnia is a genus of about 30 species with around 23 native to Australia. This species is found from Cape York Peninsula in Qld down through NSW and Vic into SA and Tas.

Description: *G. sieberiana* is a clumping sedge with woody *rhizomes growing to 3 m tall in moist areas or those subject to periodic inundation. Stems to 1 cm diameter are hollow with up to 10 *nodes. It can survive after fire by sending up shoots from the charred base

Leaves to 250 cm x 2 cm are arching, green above and paler whitish or bluish green below with no midrib. These are broad at the base and become narrower. Edges are finely saw-toothed, giving rise to the common name, saw sedge.

Flowers of creamy white occur from December to March in long *panicles to 90 cm on *culms to 3 metres. The upper half of the inflorescence has bisexual flowers, the lower half male flowers.

Fruits to 4 mm x 2 mm are shiny red-brown nuts shaped like a rugby football.

Food plant for larval stages of the sword-grass brown butterfly (*Tisiphone abeona*) and several species of skippers (*Signeta tymbophora*, *Toxidia peron* and *Hesperilla spp.*).

*rhizome = an underground stem with food reserves and ability to reproduce

*node = the position on a stem at which a leaf or leaves arise

*panicle = a much-branched flower spike with the youngest flowers at the top

*culm = an aerial stem in grasses, sedges, rushes etc bearing the inflorescence

Clumps after fire

