

## Plant of the Month - August

by Allan Carr

### *Boronia safrolifera*

**safrole boronia**

**Pronunciation:** bor-OWN-ee-a saf-rol-IF-er-a

RUTACEAE

**Derivation:** *Boronia*, after Francesco Borone, a young Italian assistant of English botanist, John Sibthorp, author of 'Flora Graeca' in the late 1700s. Borone died from a fall at the age of 25 and had no known connections with Australia. It was J E Smith who named the genus *Boronia* in 1798. *safrolifera*, a combination of *safrole* from sas(safr)as, and the Latin, *oleum* – oil, plus *fero* – to carry, (a reference to carrying the oil of sassafras).



Leaves, buds and flowers



Native bee on flower



Habit with *M. quinquenervia*

*Boronia* is a genus of about 95 species throughout Australia with one markedly different species in New Caledonia. Of the Australian species 45 are found in WA and 12 in south-east Qld.

**Description:** *B. safrolifera* is an erect shrub to 2 m with finely hairy branchlets in badly drained wallum wetland. It is found from Bribie Island in Qld, to Port Stephens in NSW. However, it is becoming rare on Bribie Island due to land clearing.

**Leaves** are opposite to 40 mm long and compound with 7 to 19 leaflets to 15 mm x 3 mm in opposite pairs except for the terminal one which is the shortest. They are paler underneath and strongly aromatic when crushed, having a sweet safrole smell similar to that of the sassafras plant.

**Flowers** to 10 mm across in clusters of 3 to 6 are deep pink, occasionally white and 4-petaled with 8 \*stamens from August to November.

**Fruits** are flattened capsules to 4 mm long; seed-bearing lobes explode in warm weather spreading the small black seeds widely.

\*stamen = one of the male organs of a flower, consisting typically of a stalk (filament) and a pollen-bearing portion (anther)



*B. rivularis*

A species closely related to this one is *B. rivularis*, found further north at Cooloola and Fraser Island.



*B. safrolifera* flowers