

Plant of the Month - November

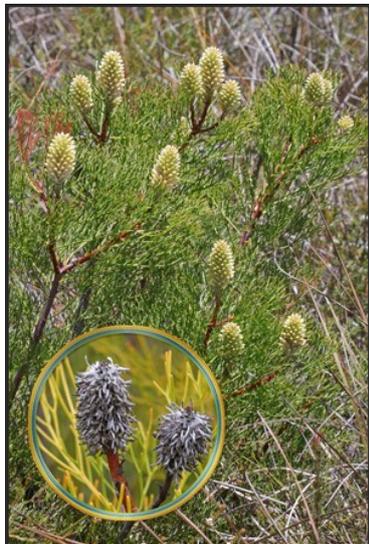
by Allan Carr

Petrophile shirleyae

Pronunciation: pet-ROFF-il-ee SHIR-lee-ay

conesticks
PROTEACEAE

Derivation: *Petrophile*, from the Greek, *petra* – a rock and *phileo* – to love (referring to the habitat of early collected species in this genus); *shirleyae*, after Dr John F. Shirley, an Inspector of Schools in Qld with an interest in Botany and a prominent member of the Royal Society of Queensland.



Habit and spent flowers



Buds above, flowers below



Fructing cone with nuts

Petrophile is a genus of 53 species, all endemic in Australia with 47 of them occurring in WA, mostly in the south-western region, a diversity hotspot. (The genus was known for many years as *Petrophila*, but *Petrophile* has priority due to being published first.)

Description: *P. shirleyae* is a small shrub to 1.2 m in the wallum heathland of south-eastern Qld from Bundaberg to the Gold Coast including Fraser Island and the three larger islands of Moreton Bay. The plant has a *lignotuber so is able to regrow after fire.

Leaves to 200 mm x 1 mm are mid- to deep-green, often reddish-bronze when young and divide two or three times. They are grooved along the upper surface and have a sharp point.

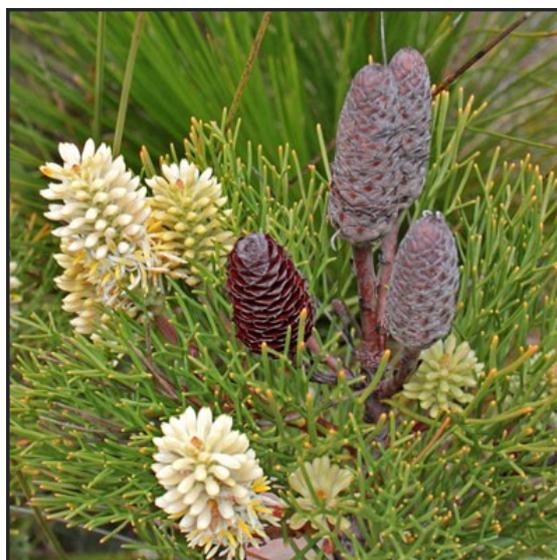
Flowers are borne in a creamy-white cone-like *inflorescence to 80 mm x 25 mm at branch ends from September to February. Individual flowers to about 10 mm long are silky-hairy outside and creamy-white and yellow.

Fruits are nuts to 3 mm x 3.5 mm embedded in brown woody cones to 80 mm long. These nuts have a *coma of white spreading hairs to 6 mm long over both surfaces that assist in wind dispersal.

*lignotuber = a woody swelling underground at the plant base with dormant buds from which new shoots develop after damage to the top of the plant from fire or cutting

*inflorescence = the arrangement in which flowers are borne on a plant

*coma = a tuft especially of hairs on a seed



Leaves, buds, flowers, fructing cones