

Plant of the Month - March

by Allan Carr

Bossiaea heterophylla

variable bossiaea

Pronunciation: boss-ee-a het-er-o-FILL-a

FABACEAE

Derivation: *Bossiaea*, after Boissieu de la Martinère, botanist on La Perouse expedition which called at Botany Bay just after the arrival of the First Fleet and left six weeks later, never to be seen again: *heterophylla*, from the Greek, *hetero* – different and *phyllo* – leaf, (a reference to different leaf shapes on the same plant).



Leaves and flowers



Fruits and leaves



Flower

Bossiaea is a genus of about 50 endemic species represented in all states. About half of these are found in south-western WA and 17 are found in Qld.

Description: *B. heterophylla* is a small spreading shrub to 1 m in coastal sandy heathland and woodland. Young branches are usually flattened and hairless. It is found from Bundaberg in Qld, south along the coast and nearby inland of NSW to Gippsland in Vic.

Leaves to 20 mm x 10 mm are alternate and variable in shape from *linear to *ovate in two rows on opposite sides of the branch as in the photo on the left above.

Flowers to 12 mm across are typically pea-shaped. The standard is broad, yellow with red markings and tinged red on the back; the keel is reddish and longer than the wings. Flowering can be from March to May and September to October.

Fruits are flattened pods to 40 mm x 5 mm with thickened edges and contain 4 to 8 small black seeds.

*linear = long and thin with parallel sides

*ovate = shaped like an egg in outline, broadest near the base



Immature fruits and skeleton leaves



Habit