

## Plant of the Month - June

by Allan Carr

### *Utricularia lateriflora*

tiny bladderwort

**Pronunciation:** yoo-trik-yoo-LAIR-ee-a lat-er-eye-FLOR-a LENTIBULARACEAE

**Derivation:** *Utricularia*, from the Latin, *utriculus* – a little bladder (referring to the insect trapping bladders on the stems); *lateriflora*, from the Latin, *lateris* – the side and *floris* – a flower (referring to the flower arising from the side).



Buds, flower + water droplets



Habit



Raceme above, flower below



*Utricularia* is an intriguing genus of small herbs, both terrestrial and aquatic that do not have true roots or leaves. Stems are modified to act as roots or leaves or traps to capture tiny animals. This is the largest genus of carnivorous plants made up of about 214 annual and perennial species with around 57 of these in tropical and temperate Australia, mostly in WA.

**Description:** *U. lateriflora* is a perennial, terrestrial herb with a few fleshy \*stolons usually found in heathland growing on wet sandy or peaty soils. Most of the plant is in the 10 cm below the surface and the flowering stems can be up to 20 cm tall. The plants absorb nutrients from the bodies of tiny animals caught in their many \*ovoid bladder traps to about 7 mm long. These traps are mechanical structures smaller than a grain of wheat. They are able to expel water to reduce the pressure inside. When the appendage near the 'door' is touched, it opens and outside water pressure rushes the victim into the bladder. The tiny animal is slowly digested and water is then expelled again to await the next catch.

**'Leaves'** to 50 mm x 5 mm are narrowly spoon-shaped on stalks scattered along the stems.

**Flowers** to about 8 mm in elongated \*racemes of 1 to 5 are bisexual, two lobed with a spur below and mauve or violet with white or yellow markings on the base of the lower lip. Flowering can be sporadic through the year but is usually from May to July on Bribie Island.

**Fruits** are globular capsules to about 3 mm across.

\*stolon = a prostrate or trailing stem that produces 'roots' at nodes

\*ovoid = egg-shaped in three dimensions

\*raceme = an unbranched flower stem with flowers on stalks



Some other local species -

*U. dichotoma* (terrestrial)



*U. aurea* (aquatic)