

Plant of the Month - July

by Allan Carr

Leucopogon leptospermoides

tea tree beard heath

Pronunciation: loo-ko-PO-gon lep-toe-sper-MOI-dees

ERICACEAE

Derivation: *Leucopogon*, from the Greek, *leucos* – white and *pogon* – beard (referring to the white hairs covering the petals); *leptospermoides*, from *Leptospermum* and the Greek, *oides* – like (like *Leptospermum*).



Leaves, buds, flower



Tiny succulent fruits

Leptospermum is a genus of about 160 species, mainly Australia but found also in Indochina, Malaysia, New Caledonia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Approximately 100 species occur in south-western WA.

Description: *L. leptospermoides* is usually a small dense shrub to about 1 m high by 1.5 m wide with fine hairs on the new branchlets that grows in coastal heathland and wallum communities from Cape York in northern Qld down the coast to Port Stephens in central NSW.

Leaves to 20 mm x 5 mm are alternate, light green and stiff with a long thin point and *ciliolate margins.

Flowers are tubular to 5 mm long with 5 white, densely hairy petals from August to November. These occur in *axillary spikes to 20 mm containing 1 to 5 flowers.



A jumper ant (*Myrmecia nigrocincta*) foraging on this pubescent branchlet.



Fruits are small opaque white, fleshy, *ovoid
*drupes to 4 mm across.

*ciliolate = fringed with fine, soft hairs

*axillary = arising from the angle between leaf and stem

*ovoid = egg-shaped in three dimensions

*drupe = a succulent fruit with a fleshy outer wall and a hard inner layer enclosing the seed

Habit in wallum heathland