

Plant of the Month - September

by Allan Carr

Melaleuca nodosa

prickly-leaved paperbark

Pronunciation: mel-a-LOO-ca nod-OH-sa

MYRTACEAE

Derivation: *Melaleuca*, from the Greek, *melas* – black and *leukos* – white, referring to black fire scars on white trunks; *nodosa*, from the Latin, *nodosus* – knotty, referring to the knotty nature of the fruit cluster.



Leaves buds and flowers



Flower cluster



Leaves and fruits

There are approximately 240 species of *Melaleuca*, 235 of which are native to Australia.

Description: *M. nodosa* is a shrub to 5 m, bark is pale brown in papery layers. This shrub is found on the Australian east coast and occasionally further inland in Qld and NSW from Cape York to Campbelltown, usually in poorly drained moist sandy soils in a variety of habitats.

Leaves to 40 mm x 3 mm on short 1 mm *petioles are narrowly *ovate or *terete, alternate or scattered, with a *pungent tip. As a result it makes a useful refuge and nesting plant for small birds.

Flowers are creamy-yellow in fluffy globular clusters to 15 mm across containing up to 20 or more individual flowers from August to November. These clusters are in the leaf axils at the branch ends making it a showy plant when in flower. In the photo on the left above there are clusters of buds ready to open as individual flowers and in the photo in the middle the sequence from buds to open flowers can be clearly seen. This shrub is somewhat important as a source of pollen for bees.

Fruits are borne in dense clusters of small woody *capsules to 3 mm diameter with many tiny brown seeds inside.

*petiole = the stalk of a leaf

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

*terete = cylindrical, circular in cross-section

*pungent = ending in a stiff sharp point

*capsule = a dry fruit which opens when mature to release seeds

Habit in wallum heathland

