

## Plant of the Month - October

by Allan Carr

### *Hardenbergia violacea*

native sarsaparilla

**Pronunciation:** har-den-BER-jee a vie-oh-LACE-ee-a

FABACEAE

**Derivation:** *Hardenbergia*, after Countess Franziska von Hardenberg, sister of Baron Karl A.A. von Hügel, Austrian patron of horticulture and traveller who collected in WA in 1833; *violacea*, from the Latin, *violaceus* – violet.



Raceme of flowers



Fruits and leaf venation

*Hardenbergia* is a genus of 3 endemic species, one in WA, one in central Qld and this one which is found in the eastern states.

**Description:** *H. violacea* is a prostrate or climbing plant with wiry stems and a long woody tap root. It is found in open forest and woodland along the coast and adjacent ranges from about Mackay in Qld through NSW and Vic to SA. There are two small populations in Tas.

**Leaves** to 100 mm x 30 mm are alternate, leathery and prominently veined on the upper surface. They are dark green above and paler bluish-green below, broadly lance-shaped.

**Flowers** are pea-shaped to 10 mm across and borne on profuse and conspicuous \*racemes of 20 to 30 flowers that are violet with two greenish-yellow spots. Uncommon colour variations can include pink and white. Their main flowering period is from July to October.

**Fruits** are flat, dark grey-brown pods to 40 mm x 10 mm which open at maturity. These contain 6 to 8 kidney-shaped seeds.

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



Under a log in a forest

On a metal frame in a garden

