

## Plant of the Month - November

by Allan Carr

### *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*

**Pronunciation:** cry-sow-SEF-a-lum a-pik-you-LAR-tum

yellow buttons

ASTERACEAE

**Derivation:** *Chrysocephalum*, from the Greek, *chrysos* – gold and *cephalus* – head; *apiculatum*, from the Latin, *apiculatus* – sharp-pointed apex, referring to the leaves.



Flower heads, leaves



Habit in a garden

*Chrysocephalum* is an endemic Australian genus of 9 species.

**Description:** *C. apiculatum* is a variable, perennial, soft-stemmed herb to 40 cm with a woody rootstock, common on deep sands and sandy and rocky soils in grassy to shrubby woodlands. In some locations it has a low ground covering habit. It occurs in all Australian states and territories in a wide range of environments and was previously known as *Helichrysum ramosissimum* and *H. apiculatum*. The great variation in plants across the country suggests that it may one day be split into a number of separate species.

**Leaves** to 50 mm x 25 mm are alternate felty, grey-green, often stem-clasping at the base and woolly hairy below. Caterpillars of the Australian painted lady butterfly, (*Vanessa kershawi*) feed on them.

**Flower** heads to 10 mm across in clusters at the ends of the branchlets are golden yellow, sometimes tinged with brown and occur throughout the year but mainly from July to September. The heads have no petals but are surrounded by rows of over-lapping golden yellow \*bracts. Flowers are pollinated by small beetles and native bees.

**Fruits** are cylindrical, brown 1 mm long \*cypselas, clustered in the old dried flower heads. Each head contains many that loosen in the head and gain a fluffy appearance as they mature. These mature seeds are dispersed by wind, ants and other insects.

\*bract = leaf-like part at the base of a flower

\*cypsela = a dry one-sided fruit not opening at maturity (pronunciation: SIP-se-la)



Dried flowers, fruits



Flower heads



Australian painted lady