

Plant of the Month - July

by Allan Carr

Leptocarpus tenax

slender twine-rush

Pronunciation: lep-toe-KAR-pus TEN-aks

RESTIONACEAE

Derivation: *Leptocarpus*, from the Greek, *leptos* – slender, thin and *carpos* – fruit; *tenax*, from *teneo* – tenacious, tough



Male flowers

Female flowers



Habit in Wallum heathland (female plants)

Leptocarpus is a genus of about 22 species in Australia most of which are found in south-west WA. This species is one of 6 in Qld and is found in all states. Based on evidence from fossil pollens, the Restionaceae likely originated more than 65 million years ago during the Late Cretaceous period, when the southern continents were still part of the super continent Gondwana.

Description: *L. tenax* is an upright round stemmed restiad to 1 m high with short creeping rhizomes to 7 mm diameter and found on the edges of wallum wetland areas in south-east Qld - sandy acid, nutrient poor soils periodically water-logged. Stems to 1 m x 2 mm are mostly unbranched. The species is *dioecious.

Leaves to 8 mm are reduced to brown stem-clasping open leaf sheaths on flowering stems. These leaf sheaths are split down one side.

Flowers are male or female occurring on separate plants from November to February. Male - drooping clusters of terminal *panicles to 4 mm, dark brown flowers. Female - erect clusters of *spikelets to 15 mm, reddish flowers with pointed *glumes. These flowers are wind pollinated.

Fruits are pale brown narrow 3-angled nuts to 3 mm long.

*dioecious = having the male and female reproductive structures on separate plants

*spikelet = a unit of inflorescence in grasses, sedges and restiads, consisting of one to many flowers and associated *glumes

*panicle = a much-branched flower spike with the youngest flowers at the top

*glume = a bract in the inflorescence of a grass, sedge or restiad



Brown stem-clasping leaf sheath