

Plant of the Month - February

by Allan Carr

Pseuderanthemum variable

Pronunciation: sue-der-ANTH-ee-mum VAIR-ee-a-beel

love flower
ACANTHACEAE

Derivation: *Pseuderanthemum*, from the Greek, pseudo – false, eranos – lovely and anthos – a flower (false Eranthemum); *variable*, from the Latin, *variabilis* – variable (referring to the variation in flower colour).



White form



Mauve form

Pseuderanthemum is a genus of about 50 species in tropical regions of the world, with 2 or 3 in Australia.

Description: *P. variable* is a small, soft, sparsely branched perennial herb to 30 cm high with hairy stems and creeping *rhizomes, usually found on the floor in rainforests or wet eucalypt forests from NT across the Top End to Cape York in Qld and down the east coast to around Bateman's Bay in NSW. It is also found in Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia.

Leaves are lance-shaped, opposite to 70 mm x 40 mm on *petioles to 30 mm, dark green above and with a purple tinge and small glandular dots below.

These leaves are food for caterpillars of a number of butterflies, including Australian Leafwing (*Doleschallia bisaltide*), Varied Eggfly (*Hypolimnna bolina*), Danaid Eggfly (*Hypolimnna misippus*), Blue-banded Eggfly (*Hypolimnna alimena*), and the Blue Argus (*Junonia orithya*).

Flowers to 10 mm across are delicate and have a narrow, tubular *corolla to 10 mm long, abruptly expanding to 5 shortly pointed and asymmetrically arranged lobes spreading to 10 mm across. They may be white, pink or mauve with darker purplish spots at the base of the broader lower lobe as in the photos above. Flowering is usually from November to May.

These flowers are sometimes eaten by the Eastern Bearded Dragon (*Pogona barbata*)

Fruits are slender, hairy *capsules to 12 mm with few to many seeds.

*rhizome = an underground stem, usually horizontal

*petiole = stalk portion of a leaf

*corolla = the part of a flower made up of the petals

*capsule = a dry fruit

Habit

