

Plant of the Month

October
2024

Common Name: Tree Waratah
Scientific Name: *Alloxylon flammeum*
P.H.Weston and Crisp
Family: Proteaceae
Genus: *Alloxylon* – Greek, “allos”, foreign and “xylon”, wood or tree.
Species: *flammeum* - flame coloured

Distribution

Restricted to the Atherton Tableland in north-eastern Queensland.

Native Habitat

Tropical rainforest on basalt derived soils between 700 - 820 metres.

Description

An evergreen tree growing to a height of 33 metres. Juvenile leaves are deeply lobed and adult leaves are simple, entire and 8-25cm long.

Flowers

Bright orange flowers rich in nectar appear between August and October. They are highly attractive to birds, especially parrots, who see colour in the red and orange spectrum and while feeding on this energy rich nectar, assist with pollination.

Fruit

Fruit is a rectangular woody pod (follicle) containing 8-10 winged seeds that ripen in February and March.

Location in Garden

Palace Garden (lawn 9), Middle Garden (bed 2) and the Native Border. Plants can also be purchased from the Growing Friends Nursery next to the Foundation and Friends Cottage - open daily.

Information

Although well represented in National Parks, the Tree Waratah was listed as a vulnerable species in 1999 because of its limited distribution. It grows successfully in well drained soils enriched with organic material and is tolerant of light frosts.

This species was renamed in 1991 by Royal Botanic Garden's botanist Peter Weston and colleague Mike Crisp, as part of their research into the evolution of the Proteaceae family. Australia is the centre for biodiversity of this plant family that originated on the Gondwanan supercontinent over 100 million years ago. The family also occurs in South and Central America, India, Oceania, Central and Southern Africa. Striking examples of African genera such as *Protea* and *Leucospermum* can be seen in our Southern Africa garden.

In Australia, it includes not only rainforest trees such as the Tree Waratah and Macadamia, but more recently evolved and iconic plants from heathland and forests including; Banksias, Grevilleas and the NSW floral emblem, the Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*). Many of these can be seen in our Australian Rockery next to the Opera House.

