



GOOD'S BANKSIA

Banksia goodii R.Br. (PROTEACEAE)



(photo S. D. Hopper)

Banksia goodii is a creeping shrub and one of the smallest banksias but produces leaves and cones larger than most of the tree species. Like other banksia species, it is very attractive and sought after as a garden plant. However, it is not as well known or widely cultivated as most other banksias, partly because of its great rarity and very restricted geographical range.

It is one of the many banksias described by the distinguished plant collector Robert Brown. He named it in 1830 in honour of another collector, Peter Good, who had accompanied Brown on Flinder's voyage to Australia in 1801-2. However, the type specimen of the species was obtained by yet another collector, William Baxter, who discovered the species somewhere in the vicinity of King George Sound in 1829.

Good's Banksia is unusual among the banksias and the Western Australian flora as a whole, in that it appears to be almost exclusively pollinated by mammals.

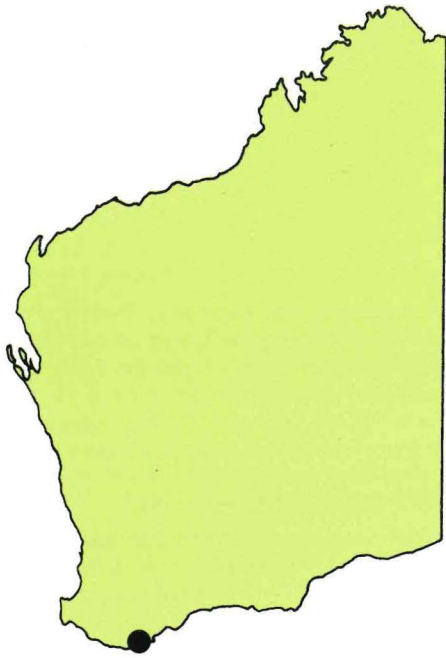
DESCRIPTION

A creeping shrub with spreading hairy branches either below or just above the ground bearing erect leaves and flower cones. Young growth red-brown, softly hairy. Mature leaves green with a prominent yellow midrib, up to 45 cm long, tapering to a very long thin stalk which is curved and attached to the underside of the branches. Leaf margins shortly and irregularly toothed. Flower cones up to 20 cm long, more or less cylindrical, with large woolly bracts at the base and closely surrounded by a circle of leaves. Flower buds bronze-coloured, furry. Styles yellow, curving upwards. Fruiting cones have scattered prominent furry brown fruits among the persistent dead flowers.

There are several other Western Australian banksias with a creeping habit. *Banksia petiolaris* shows the closest resemblance to *Banksia goodii* but can be readily distinguished by its yellow flower cones and by having its narrower leaves borne along the branches. *Banksia goodii*'s leaves are clumped together, surrounding the flower cones. *Banksia gardneri* is another close relative which differs in having more regularly lobed leaves and smaller flower cones.



Banksia goodii foliage showing the red tints in its young leaves. (photo: S. D. Hopper)



DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

The species occurs between Albany and the Porongurup Range, with a geographical range of less than 25 km. It grows in sandy soil in low woodlands of banksias and the Albany Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus staeri*). The average annual rainfall is about 800 mm.



Banksia goodii growing in dense heath (right) and in recently burnt low woodland with Blackboys and Blackgins (above). (photos: S. D. Hopper)

REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY

Flowering occurs in November-January. The flowers appear to be predominately pollinated by small mammals, especially the Honey Possum (*Tarsipes spencerae*).

Wild plants set few seeds. In cultivation a very high proportion of the seeds germinate. The seedlings grow slowly at first but many flower within 3 or 4 years.

The plants spread horizontally by underground stems but only develop a single central lignobuber, from which they re-generate after fires.

CONSERVATION

Good's Banksia is in cultivation but has always been in short supply because its rarity in the wild has restricted the amount of seed available for collection. One Western Australian nursery has now established a stock garden of several hundred plants which should soon provide a large source of seeds for sale.

The largest surviving wild populations, totalling approximately 1 000 plants, are on an A class Nature Reserve. Elsewhere the species is only known from a few small populations on narrow road verges. It may also occur on farms in the district, but this has yet to be confirmed.

IUCN Red Data Book Category: RARE

Australian Plants at Risk Code: 2RC

FURTHER READING

Holiday, I. & Watton, G. (1975). "A Field Guide to Banksias." Rigby: Adelaide.

George, A. S. (1981). The genus *Banksia* L. f. (Proteaceae). *Nuytsia* 3: 239-474.

