

Plant of the Month - April

by Allan Carr

Epacris pulchella

Wallum Heath

Pronunciation: ee-PAC-ris pull-KELL-a

ERICACEAE

Derivation: *Epacris*: from the Greek *epi* – upon, *acris* – hilltop (referring to the habitat of some species); *pulchella*: from the Latin *pulcher* – beautiful.



Common form



Flowers, leaves

This plant is a member of the Ericaceae family (heaths and heathers) widespread in many parts of the world, especially in Europe and South Africa. Ericaceae includes *Erica*, *Rhododendron* and *Pieris*.

Most of Australia's Ericaceae species belong to the subfamily Styphelioideae which was formerly classified as a separate family, the Epacridaceae.

Epacris consists of about 40 species, mostly from Australia where 35 species are found in south-eastern Qld, NSW, Vic, Tas and SA. They also occur in New Zealand and New Caledonia.

Description: *Epacris pulchella* is a slender erect shrub to 75 cm comprising several long branches with *pubescent branchlets. A showy species growing in low nutrient soils from Fraser Island and coastal Qld, down the coast of NSW and west to the Blue Mountains.

Leaves are alternate, small and more or less oval-shaped but tapering and *pungent. They are usually approximately 7 mm by 4 mm.

Flowers, 5 mm to 8 mm across, with white or pink pointed petals occur in March to May and September to November. They present a massed display from the leaf axils along the branches.

Fruits are capsules 2 mm in diameter with many tiny seeds.

*pubescent = covered with short, soft hairs

*pungent = having a stiff, sharp point



Pink form