

Plant of the Month - November

by Allan Carr

Ozothamnus diosmifolius

Pronunciation: oz-oh-THAM-nus di-os-mi-FOAL-ee-us

Derivation: *Ozothamnus*, from the Greek, *ozo* – to smell, *thamnus* – a shrub (a reference to smelly foliage); *diosmifolius*, foliage like the genus *Diosma*.

Sago Flower
ASTERACEAE



Habit



Dense heads of buds



Flowers

Ozothamnus is a genus of about 56 species, 48 of which are endemic to Australia, mostly in the eastern states, 7 species occur in New Zealand and one in New Caledonia. All Australian species were formerly classified in the genus, *Helichrysum*.

Description: *O. diosmifolius* is a much branched shrub to 2 m, sometimes taller, with *tomentose branches. Bark is papery on older plants. These shrubs are found on margins of rainforest and heathland and are often prominent in open forest from the Gympie district in Qld south to Eden in NSW. A number of selected forms are widely grown for cut flower production as they are long lasting and complement other, more spectacular species.

Two cultivars released for purchase under Plant Breeders' Rights are 'Cook's Snow White', with straight dark stems (up to 100) and good white flower heads. Another is 'Cook's Tall Pink' which holds its colour well and provides long stems for the Japanese market. Plants must be grown in soil with good drainage and free of nematodes.

Leaves are alternate to 15 mm by 2 mm, linear with a rounded end, a tiny hooked tip and *discolorous, (dull green and rough above, white and woolly below). They are aromatic with an unpleasant smell when crushed.

Flowers to 4 mm across are produced in dense, domed or almost flat heads of 20 to 100 with white or pink *bracts from July to November.

Fruits are minute 1 mm long *achenes, each topped with a ring of fine white hairs.

*tomentose = with a covering of dense, matted woolly hairs

*discolorous = when both surfaces are of different colours

*bract = leaf-like structure associated with a flower

*achene = a dry, non-opening one-seeded fruit



Pink form at Stanthorpe