

## Plant of the Month - January

by Allan Carr

### *Baeckea frutescens*

**Pronunciation:** BECK-ee-a froo-TESS-enz

weeping baeckea

MYRTACEAE

**Derivation:** *Baeckea*, after Dr Abraham Baeck, Swedish naturalist and physician, best friend of Linnaeus, *frutescens*, from the Latin, *frutex* – shrub or bush.



Pendulous branchlets



Flowers



Fruits

*Baeckea* is a genus of 14 species found in eastern Australia. A revision around twenty years ago removed over 50 species now placed in *Babingtonia*, *Euromyrtus*, *Ochrosperma* and *Triplarina*.

**Description:** *B. frutescens* is the type species for the genus (the one to which the generic name is tied) and the only species found outside Australia - through Malesia to southern China. It is a shrub to 3 m or 4 m with weeping branchlets in heathland and sandy soils along watercourses from central coastal Qld to northern NSW. Bark is greyish, fissured and flaky. This plant has a long history of use in traditional medicine in south-east Asia.

**Leaves** to 20 mm x 1 mm are green to greyish, needle-like and clustered, appearing as if in \*whorls. They are bronze-coloured when new and aromatic when crushed. **Bark**



**Flowers** to 5 mm across are white with 5 tiny petals and borne in abundance along arching stems from October to February.



**Fruits** are non-woody capsules to 2 mm across which shed numerous tiny, angular, brown seeds at maturity.

\*whorl = a ring of leaves, bracts or floral parts borne at the same level on an axis

From the mid 1800s to 1998 this species was known as *B. stenophylla* but is now included under *B. frutescens*.

Habit when young