

Adenanthos

Western Australian Woolly Bushes

Specimens of *Adenanthos*, WA Woolly Bushes, might look like conifers, but these compact shrubs from the south-west of Western Australia are flowering plants. A close look at the flowers might present some clues. They are flowering plants in the Proteaceae plant family, and are closely related to the Australian icons *Banksia*, *Hakea*, *Grevillea* and Waratah (*Telopea*).

The flowers of Woolly Bushes are unusual in that they produce just one flower in each inflorescence, thus appearing *solitary* rather than presenting in large clusters so typical of many other species of Proteaceae.

There are 31 species of *Adenanthos*. Most occur in south-western Western Australia, just two species occur in South Australia and western Victoria. Remarkably, they are more closely related to South African genera like *Serruria*, *Leucospermum* and *Leucodendron* than to many Australian genera. Proteaceae is a Gondwanan plant family that divided into subfamilies before the break-up of the continents. The subfamily Proteoideae occurs mainly in southern Africa, but is also represented in Australia (e.g., *Adenanthos* and *Isopogon*) and New Zealand.



Adenanthos sericeus
Albany Woolly Bush.



Distribution of *Adenanthos* – Woolly Bushes.
Modified from *Atlas of Living Australia*



World-wide distribution of Proteaceae.
South-western Western Australia and the Western Cape of South Africa are the principal centres of diversity.

Woolly Bushes have long been popular as garden plants. Every year potted specimens of these charming Australian native plants that in so many ways are superficially similar to conifers, are used as Christmas trees. The cut foliage too, is long lasting and in spite of the lack of flowers, has become popular with florists.



Adenanthos sericeus – Albany Woolly Bush – Typical habitat on a coastal headland near Albany, Western Australia.

Not all *Adenanthos* are 'Woolly Bushes'. Even though they look as if they have compound leaves, all species have *simple* leaves. Those of *Woolly Bushes* are divided many times, terete (needle-shaped) in cross section, often with a cover of soft, fine hairs, that gives the bush its woolly appearance. Leaves of *Adenanthos* species that don't fall into the *Woolly Bush* classification, can be simple, unlobed or lobed, long and thin, oval-shaped, or even wedge-shaped.



Adenanthos meisneri has non-woolly mature leaves.

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Distribution map of *Adenanthos* modified from *Atlas of Living Australia*:

https://biocache.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?q=lsid:https://id.biodiversity.org.au/node/apni/2909275#tab_mapView

World distribution map of Proteaceae: Missouri Botanical Gardens:

<http://www.mobot.org/mobot/research/apweb/orders/protealesweb.html>

Nelson EC. 1977 A taxonomic revision of the genus *Adenanthos* (Proteaceae). *Brunonia* 1, 303-406.

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adenanthos>

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adenanthos-sericeus>



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