

Plant of the Month

February
2024

Common Name: Pink Euodia
Scientific Name: *Melicope elleryana* (F.Muell.) T.G.Hartley
Family: Rutaceae
Genus: *Melicope* from Greek: *meli* - honey and *cope* - "a division". refers to glands at the base of the ovary.
Species epithet: for astronomer Robert J. Ellery.

Distribution

Occurs from the Maluku Islands east to the Solomon Islands and south to New Guinea and northern Australia. In Australia it is found in the far north-east of Western Australia, the Top End of the Northern Territory, northern and eastern Queensland and south to the Clarence River in northern New South Wales

Native Habitat

Coastal and inland forest, woodland and rainforest from sea level to an altitude of 800 metres.

Description

Tree up to 25 metres tall with pale brown and corky bark. Leaves are 3-foliolate, glossy green and contain numerous but very small oil dots visible with a hand lens.

Flowers and Fruit

Pink flowers are arranged in panicles along branches below or back from leaves. Sepals are ovate and stamens are longer than the petals giving the flowers a distinctive appearance. Small black seeds are held in a fruit composed of 1- 4 follicles.

Location in Garden

Bed 1a, near the Maiden Theatre. Australian Rainforest Garden. Use our Garden Explorer web portal to find more examples - rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/visit/garden-explorer

Information

Although it has a widespread distribution and was first described in 1865, this species is not as common in cultivation as its obvious appeal this time of the year would suggest. The attractive pink flowers are not only a distinctive feature in the garden but they attract birds including Rainbow Lorikeets in search of nectar. Trees are fast growing even as far south as Sydney.

In the tropics leaves of *Melicope elleryana* are a vital food source for caterpillars of the Ulysses Butterfly (*Papilio ulysses*) pictured. Eggs are laid on the leaves which are consumed by developing larvae before pupating. Although the butterfly naturally occurs in tropical rainforest, suburban plantings of Pink Euodia in tropical Queensland have been encouraged to provide egg laying and foraging sites for these spectacular butterflies.

In New Guinea, pieces of the bark are added to fermenting palm wine for flavouring. Clear sap extracted from burning bark is also used in New Guinea as an adhesive, for caulking canoes and to treat sores. A related but smaller growing species, *Melicope rubra* (Little Evodia), can also be seen growing in our Australian Rainforest Garden.

