

July 2026

Plant of the month

Common Emu Bush



Common Name: Common Emu Bush

Scientific Name: *Eremophila glabra* subsp. *tomentosa*

Family: Scrophulariaceae

Genus: *Eremophila* from Greek, eremos = desert and phileo= to love, ie “desert loving”, referencing the habitat of this species.

Species name: *glabra* from Latin, glaber, without hairs or smooth surfaced, referring to the hairless leaves. In this case, additional subspecies name *tomentosa* means "covered with dense, matted hairs."



About

Eremophila is a large genus of over 240 species, all endemic to Australia. The family Scrophulariaceae is also known as the figwort family.

Eremophila glabra is a species with many different shapes ranging from prostrate forms (ground cover, low growing) to shrubs up to 1.5 metres high. Leaves may be glabrous (without hairs) or greyish and conspicuously hairy. The flowers also vary considerably and may be green, yellow, orange or red.

Eremophila glabra has hairless leaves, whilst *Eremophila glabra* subspecies *tomentosa* has silver-grey, furry leaves and bright, tubular orange-red flowers. It attracts native nectar eating birds such as honeyeaters and insects.

Unlike many Eremophila species that prefer the arid inland, this subspecies thrives on coastal dunes and sandplains, coping exceptionally well with sandy soils and salt. The fruit provides a natural barrier for the seeds, making them highly dormant and very difficult to germinate.

Propagation from seed of Eremophila species is unreliable, but most forms strike readily from cuttings.

A range of Eremophila species are available from the Growing Friends Plant Nursery here at Mount Annan.



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Native Habitat

Native to coastal dunes and sandplains in Western Australia.

Distribution

Genus can be found in dry areas of all mainland states.

Description

A small to medium shrub reaching about 0.5 to 2 meters tall. The leaves have soft, hairy surfaces.

Flowers

The flowers are typically bright red, orange, or red brown. Some varieties (prostrate) are yellow. They bloom mainly from April to October (late winter to summer).

Fruit

The fruit is a small, slightly fleshy, woody drupe that contains the seeds. It starts green before aging to a dark brown or black. The outer layer covers a very hard inner woody stone that protects the seeds.

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