

October 2026

Plant of the month

Tree Waratah



Common Name: Tree Waratah

Scientific Name: *Alloxylon flammeum*

Family: Proteaceae

Genus: P.H.Weston and Crisp

Species epithet: Greek “allos” foreign and “xylon” wood -refers to the trees unusual timber.

Species epithet: *flammeum* – flame coloured flowers.



Although well represented in National Parks, the Tree Waratah was listed as a vulnerable species in 1999 because of its limited distribution. In cultivation it grows successfully in well drained soils enriched with organic material and is tolerant of light frosts. Plants are available to purchase at our Growing Friends Plant Sales.

This species was renamed in 1991 by Botanic Gardens of Sydney botanist Peter Weston and colleague Mike Crisp, as part of their research into the evolution of the Proteaceae family. Australia is the centre for biodiversity of this plant family that originated on the Gondwanan supercontinent over 100 million years ago. The family also occurs in South and Central America, India, Oceania, Central and Southern Africa.

In Australia, it includes not only rainforest trees such as the Tree Waratah and Macadamia, but more recently evolved and iconic plants from heathland and forests including; banksias, grevilleas and the NSW floral emblem, the Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*).



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Distribution

Restricted to the Atherton Tableland in north-eastern Queensland.

Native Habitat

Tropical rainforest on basalt derived soils between 700 - 820 metres.

Description

An evergreen tree growing to a height of 33 metres. Juvenile leaves are deeply lobed and adult leaves are simple, entire and 8-25cm long.

Flowers

Bright orange flowers rich in nectar appear between August and October. They are highly attractive to birds, especially parrots, who see colour in the red and orange spectrum and while feeding on this energy rich nectar, assist with pollination.

Fruit

Fruit is a rectangular woody pod (follicle) containing 8-10 winged seeds that ripen in February and March.

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