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Cryptogam of the Month - March 2008



Xanthoparmelia semiviridis

Xanthoparmelia semiviridis is a remarkable free living soil lichen that is frequently found in the arid areas throughout Australia. Normally seen in the dry, rolled up state, it rapidly turns green and unrolls after a rainfall event. This species has been recorded as surviving extreme high temperatures in the desiccated state, a feature that helps it survive in desert areas.

Reproduction in this species appears to rely on vegetative spread, as no fruiting bodies have been seen to date. Vegetative spread occurs as the organism is blown around by the wind and fragments of the fragile, dry thallus are broken off, spreading across the soil. This degree of mobility is due to the absence of rhizines (a root like structure) to anchor the thallus to a substrate. . In the re-hydrated state the thallus is robust and flexible, temporarily restricting movement and spread.

Previously known as *Chondropsis semiviridis* a monotypic genus, but now considered to belong with *Xanthoparmelia*.