

# endangered

by Andrew Brown



## Pine featherflower

Verticordias, or featherflowers as they are commonly known, are among the most attractive of our native plant species. Currently, 101 species are known and these can be found scattered throughout the south-west of Western Australia. Some even occur in the arid interior.

Although many are common and widespread, some are confined to very specialised habitats and several of these are currently listed as threatened. One of the rarest of these is *Verticordia staminosa*, a species that is confined to a few granite outcrops in the Wheatbelt.

*Verticordia staminosa* has two subspecies and one of these is further divided into two varieties. All are currently declared as rare flora, with two of them (*Verticordia staminosa* subsp. *staminosa* and *Verticordia staminosa* subsp. *cylindracea* var. *erecta*) ranked as critically endangered. The first of these is confined to a single granite outcrop near Wongan Hills and is commonly known as

Wongan featherflower. The second is found on two closely spaced granite outcrops near Newdegate and has the common name pine featherflower due to its erect habit and superficial similarity to a small pine tree.

Pine featherflower is a small, many-branched shrub with very narrow, more or less stalkless leaves to one-and-a-half centimetres long. Its solitary yellow flowers have protruding stamens six to seven millimetres long that are bright red with yellow tips. Below these are very feathery, yellow sepals five to six millimetres long and two bright red persistent bracts.

Pine featherflower differs from Wongan featherflower and the closely related granite featherflower (*Verticordia staminosa* subsp. *cylindracea* var. *cylindracea*) in its erect habit, growing up to one metre high. Interestingly, pine featherflower grows with granite featherflower at one location and the two do not appear to hybridise.

Some mature plants of pine featherflower have been killed

when grazed by sheep. However, the main threat appears to be drought, with little winter rainfall in the Newdegate area over the past few years. Many plants look stressed and few seedlings have been observed.

Pine featherflower was declared as rare flora in October 1996 and ranked critically endangered in September 2000.

A recovery plan has been prepared for pine featherflower, and the Katanning District Threatened Flora Recovery Team is coordinating recovery actions that address threats to its survival in the wild. A two-sided A4 poster has also been prepared and distributed. A copy will shortly be placed on the department's website ([www.naturebase.net](http://www.naturebase.net)).

If you want to know more about pine featherflower, detailed information can be found in the comprehensively written and beautifully illustrated book by Elizabeth George entitled *Verticordia—The turner of hearts*.

Photos by Andrew Brown

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