

# endangered

by Andrew Brown



## Woolly lysiosepalum

A member of the *Sterculiaceae* family, *Lysiosepalum* is a small genus of five species endemic to the Albany–Geraldton area of Western Australia. All are shrubs to 1.5 metre high with attractive pink or pink-mauve, star-shaped flowers. Petals are reduced to scales or are absent, and the six sepals are petal-like. The name *Lysiosepalum* is derived from the Greek *lysios*, meaning loosening, and the Latin *sepalum*, meaning sepal, in reference to the divided sepals found in all species.

While three *Lysiosepalum* species are relatively common, the other two, pepper-scented lysiosepalum (*Lysiosepalum aromaticum*) and woolly lysiosepalum (*Lysiosepalum abollatum*), are rare, with the former known from one population near Highbury and the latter from one population near Wongan Hills.

Described by Carol Wilkins in 2001, woolly lysiosepalum is a dense shrub to 1.5 metres high by 1.5 metres wide with stems

and leaves covered in distinctive, white, woolly hairs—hence the species' common name. Its leaves are mid green in colour, and 10 to 16 millimetres long by two to three millimetres wide. Up to eight pink, or pink-mauve flowers, 16 to 30 millimetres across, are borne on inflorescences 40 to 90 millimetres in length. Flowers appear between August and September.

Woolly lysiosepalum is similar to wrinkled leaf lysiosepalum (*Lysiosepalum rugosum*) in having an upper leaf surface that is wrinkled rather than smooth, but is distinguished by its shorter leaf stalks, and leaves with large, long-stalked hairs, rather than small, stalkless hairs.

In the single-known locality, the species grows in red and orange-brown sandy-clay soil with York gum (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*), sandplain mallee (*E. ebbanoensis*), and *Acacia*, *Grevillea* and *Hibbertia* species.

Woolly lysiosepalum was first collected in 1976 and, despite numerous surveys since, has not

been found anywhere else. Just 129 plants are known and, due to restricted habitat and threats associated with low population size, poor recruitment and drought, the species is currently declared as rare flora under the Western Australian *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and ranked as critically endangered. The species is not currently listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) Avon-Mortlock District Threatened Flora Recovery Team is implementing an interim recovery plan for the species. Recovery actions include fencing to exclude stock and other herbivores, seed collection and propagation of additional plants.

It is possible that there are more populations of woolly lysiosepalum in the Wongan Hills area. If you think you have found this species, please advise DEC.

Photos by Sonya Thomas



- 51 New marine parks website a hit with kids  
School children can learn about marine parks with a new interactive website.
- 54 Bringing back the animals  
Karakamia Wildlife Sanctuary near Perth protects threatened native animals, enabling them to be relocated to natural habitats.

## Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 15 Bookmarks  
*Birds of the Greater South West Western Australia*  
*Fixing Climate: The story of climate science and how to stop global warming*  
*Geology of Western Australia's National Parks*
- 30 Feature park  
Mount Augustus National Park
- 39 Endangered  
Woolly lysiosepalum
- 62 Urban antics  
Love is all around...

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