

Plant of the Month — March 2017

Helminthocladia australis Harv.



Helminthocladia australis is a mucilaginous red seaweed that ranges in size from 10-40cm, and varies in colour from red to brown to purple. The species is found in areas of slight to moderate wave action, inhabiting coastlines from Exmouth across southern Australia to New South Wales and Tasmania.

This species has two free living phases in its life history, a feature that is common in many Western Australian algae. The plant pictured is the gametophyte phase, which can generally be found in the Perth area during the summer months. The alternate phase is known as the tetrasporophyte, which is a small, inconspicuous, filamentous plant, only a few millimetres in size.

Helminthocladia australis will be included in the forthcoming *Algae of Australia: Marine Benthic Flora of North-western Australia, 2. Red Algae*, by the Western Australian Herbarium's Curator and Senior Research Scientist, Dr John Huisman.

Text: S. Moylan

Photo: J. Huisman

[Find out more about *Helminthocladia australis* Harv.](#)

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