

Banksia conferta



Family:	Proteaceae
Distribution:	Four distinct populations from south eastern Queensland to the Blue Mountains near Sydney.
Common Name:	No generally accepted common name
Derivation of Name:	<i>Banksia</i> ...after Sir Joseph Banks. <i>conferta</i> ...from Latin <i>confertus</i> , crowded, referring to the crowded flowers in the inflorescences.
Conservation Status:	Not currently listed as threatened under the EPBC Act*. However, regarded as vulnerable over the long term. Classified as 3VC (subsp. <i>conferta</i>) and 2VC (subsp. <i>penicillata</i>) under the ROTAP* system.

General Description:

Banksia conferta is a medium to large shrub which can reach a height of 3-4 metres by a 3 metre spread. It generally has a single smooth to rough barked trunk to 1 metre before branching. The leaves are elliptical in shape, deep green on top and silvery below and usually have entire margins, but are occasionally serrated. The hairy new growth is attractive - being brownish or reddish in colour. The flowers occur in narrow spikes which are typically about 60 - 190 mm long, 60mm wide and pale yellow in colour when fully open. The distinctive flower buds are highly variable in colour, with deep brown, chestnut, greenish and even slate blue-grey reported. The seeds are enclosed in follicles attached to a woody cone and are generally retained within the cone until burnt.



Banksia conferta subsp. *penicillata*

When walking in the bush, the multicoloured inflorescences are often easy to miss as they blend in well with the foliage. Some people are also very aware of their musky sweet smell (while others are unable to detect any odour at all!). This leads to speculation that the flowers are designed for mammalian rather than avian pollination (and certainly possums, bats and native rats and mice are known to feed on them).

There are two subspecies recognised which occur in four distinct populations:

- subsp. *conferta*; known from three areas - the Glasshouse Mountains, and Lamington Plateau in Queensland; Coorabakh National Park near Taree, NSW.
- subsp. *penicillata*; known only from the Newnes Plateau and Wollemi areas in the Western Blue Mountains, NSW. This subspecies (shown in the Photo gallery) differs from subsp. *conferta* in having generally serrated adult leaves (though entire leaved plants are sometimes found!), smoother grey bark and slightly larger seed pods.

Some authorities regard these subspecies as distinct species in their own right (ie. *Banksia conferta* and *Banksia penicillata*).

Both subspecies are nonlignotuberous, that is, they do not have a woody, underground structure that can produce new shoots. As a result they rely on seed to regenerate after fire. It was thought for some time that the Queensland forms were lignotuberous, which strengthened the argument for the Newnes Plateau banksia being regarded as a separate species. However this was later found to be incorrect.

This species has been in cultivation for only a relatively short time but is proving to be reliable in temperate and sub-tropical climates on well drained soil. The attractive foliage, new growth and unusual colors in bud are its best features horticulturally. Thus far, the forms encountered in cultivation are almost always subspecies *conferta*; subspecies *penicillata* has only been rarely grown. It is best suited to full sun or dappled shade and should be useful as a densely foliage screening plant.

B.conferta is closely related to *B.paludosa*, especially subspecies *astrolux* from Nattai National Park near Mittagong in NSW. Indeed, the Nattai banksia was originally thought to be *B.conferta* subsp. *penicillata* until examined more closely. Forms of *Banksia paludosa* generally have narrower inflorescences (40mm diameter) with open rather than crowded individual flowers in bud, and new growth lacks the reddish hairs of the subspecies of *B.conferta*.

Propagation from seed or cuttings is relatively easy.

* EPBC Act = Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999;
ROTAP = Rare or Threatened Australian Plants (Briggs and Leigh, 1988)
For further information refer the [Australian Plants at Risk](#) page