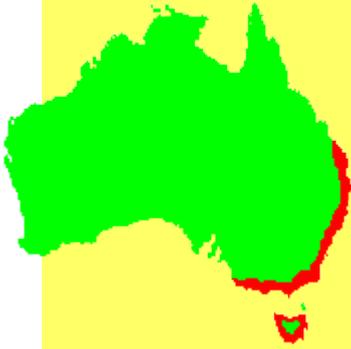


Epacris obtusifolia



Family:	Ericaceae (subfamily Styphelioideae)
Distribution:	Heath and open forests of coast and adjacent ranges from southern Victoria to south-east Queensland and Tasmania.
Common Name:	Blunt-leaf heath
Derivation of Name:	<i>Epacris</i>from Greek, <i>epi</i> , upon and <i>acris</i> , a summit, referring to the altitude where some species occur <i>obtusifolia</i> From Latin <i>obtusus</i> , blunt and <i>folius</i> , a leaf, referring to the blunt ends of the leaves of this species.
Conservation Status:	Not considered to be at risk in the wild.

General Description:

The plant family Ericaceae (heaths and heathers) is widespread in many parts of the globe, particularly Europe and South Africa. It contains a number of widely cultivated plants such as *Erica*, *Rhododendron* and *Pieris*.

Like most of Australia's members of the Ericaceae, *Epacris* belongs to the subfamily Styphelioideae, which was formerly classified as a separate family, the Epacridaceae. *Epacris* consists of about 40 species of mainly small shrubs. Most are endemic to Australia but a few species can be found in New Zealand and New Caledonia. They occur in a variety of habitats from alpine areas to coastal heaths.



Epacris obtusifolia

Photo: Brian Walters

Epacris obtusifolia is typically an erect shrub up to 100 cm high comprising several long branches. The leaves are small and elliptical with a blunt end (in contrast to other species which are often prickly). They are about 10 mm long by 3 mm wide. The white flowers are tubular, up to 10-14 mm long and occur in a massed display along the branches from the leaf axils. They contain nectar and are frequented by honey-eating birds. Flowering occurs mainly in late winter and spring.

The species is well known in cultivation and is suited to temperate and sub-tropical areas. It prefers a well drained position in semi shade and should not be allowed to dry out. It is also a very attractive plant for a container.

Propagation of *E. obtusifolia* is usually by cuttings of firm current season's growth. Like most epacrids, the roots are very fine and easily damaged during transplanting. Cuttings are probably best placed into individual small pots or tubes to minimise root disturbance. The species can be grown from seed but this is not readily available.