

# Mount Blackwood Holly

## The Mount Blackwood Holly - *Graptophyllum ilicifolium*



**Not long after the Mackay Branch of the Society for Growing Australian Plants was formed, members were alerted to the fact that the rare plant, *Graptophyllum ilicifolium*, had originally been collected from Mount Blackwood in the 1800's.**

It wasn't until early in 1984, when member David Champion, was beginning geological fieldwork in the Mount Blackwood & Mount Jukes areas that the following description was obtained from the Queensland Herbarium. *Graptophyllum ilicifolium* is a shrub to 5 metres. It has opposite leaves which have spinose margins. The leaves are 7.5 cm to 10 cm long, much veined and very glossy. Flowers are red/fuschia in

short clusters, about 2 - 2.5 cm long. The type collection; ie, the collection from which the species was first described, was collected by Nernst from Mount Blackwood, and is now in the Melbourne Herbarium. Additional material from this collection is also held by the Kew Gardens Herbarium in London. Late in the last century, a collection by Nugent is recorded from "Port Mackay" but there had been no further official recordings, although the plant was well known to some of the local property owners.

David often encountered holly-leaved plants on early field trips, but their leaves were always alternate. It was 25 April 1984, that the first plants that met the description were sighted.

Unfortunately, there were neither flowers nor fruit, but there was a marked similarity to the Queensland Holly - *Graptophyllum spinigerum*. Both species display a conspicuous difference in the size of each leaf pair.

On subsequent field trips, this plant was encountered in increasing numbers at several sites all within the rainforest but it was not until mid-July, while mapping on a property on Mt Adder; that a few plants were observed carrying deep pink buds and a few dried fruit. With the consent of the property owner, collections were made and positive identification was obtained from the Queensland Herbarium.

Since then, the Mount Blackwood Holly has been propagated and

trialled by Society for Growing Australian Plants (SGAP) Mackay Branch members and friends.

It was offered to the general public for the first time at the Australian Plant Spectacular in 1991 and is now available at nurseries - often as "Holly Fuschia".. The Mount Blackwood Holly was adopted as the floral emblem of the Mackay Branch of SGAP in 1992 and the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens in 2003.

### Description

Mount Blackwood Holly is a large

rainforest understorey shrub that grows in granitic soils with dark, shiny green, holly-like leaves. Clusters of deep pink, tubular flowers are borne in the leaf axils between mid winter and early spring. It does best in a semi-shaded, well-drained, well-mulched, moist position, but will also take full sun if constant moisture is applied. Trim lightly after flowering to maintain a compact shape. An excellent hedge specimen.

Information supplied by Irene Champion.

### Propagation

Cuttings provide early flowering specimens, but the plant regularly grows from seed. The seed capsules form after flowering in late spring, early summer, ripen and explode flinging the seeds some distance. Plants reared from seed take an extra year or so to flower.



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