

Fragrant Frangipani

by Ed Parker

The introduced Frangipani will be known to most people for its showy, fragrant flowers. But how many know that there is a plant native to Queensland's rainforests that has the same common name and can be just as showy and fragrant?

Though called 'Native Frangipani', the native Australian version is unrelated to the introduced Frangipani (*Plumeria rubra*) which is a native of tropical central and south America.

Native Frangipani, or *Hymenosporum flavum* to call it by its scientific name, is in the same family as the Pittosporums, *Pittosporaceae*. (The introduced Frangipani is in a different family altogether, *Apocynaceae*.)

Native Frangipani has been chosen as this month's feature because it is currently providing great displays, being in flower in late spring. Its fragrance rivals that of its more widely planted exotic counterpart.

Particularly at dusk and in the early morning, a single tree or shrub can fill the air with the wafting fragrance of its prolific, cream to yellow, showy flowers.

Native Frangipani grows naturally in SE Queensland, but extends throughout eastern Australian rainforests from the central NSW coast north to around Cairns.

Though apparently not recorded in Centenary Suburbs' remnant bushlands, *Hymenosporum flavum* is a worthy garden plant for those who wish an Australian native to rival the exotic Frangipani.

In its natural habitats, its growth form can vary from a shrub to a tree up to 20m. It occupies a variety of rainforest types as well as open country once covered by rainforest.

The plant flowers all over with the attractive and highly perfumed flowers which last some weeks (and are not as fragile as are those of the exotic plant).

As a garden plant, it is an ideal tree or shrub to include in any backyard re-created rainforest. It is quite tough and hardy, and in fact makes a more showy presence as a stunted shrub.

In ideal conditions of moist, well-drained humus-rich soils, *Hymenosporum flavum* is fast growing in its early stages. Pruning is recommended if you wish to keep it as a more compact shrub.



Photo by E Parker

Hymenosporum flavum (Native Frangipani) displaying its showy, fragrant yellow flowers.

This regular Nature Watch column is contributed by your local Centenary bushland care groups.

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