

Australian Plants

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Colour Photography by J. Glass

PILEANTHUS FILIFOLIUS

This is a most outstanding plant. A shrubby little thing 18" high. In the heat and heart of summer it bravely throws out a lovely little Geranium-like head of flowers. This plant is growing in white sand plain country. What a glorious colour. In some areas they grow to 5 feet tall but is a lovely small shrub for that hot position—J. Glass.

I could have reproduced from many other beautiful slides some close-ups of the flower being very spectacular but this shows the bush to advantage—Editor.

WILDFLOWERS FOR THE ROCK GARDEN

PILEANTHUS

THE "COPPER CUPS" GENUS by F. Lullfitz

There are listed three species of *Pileanthus* viz. *P. filifolius* Meissn., *P. linearis* Labill. and *P. peduncularis* Endl. They are shrubs 2'-7' and are remarkably showy in flower. They belong to the family Myrtaceae and are akin to the *Chamaelaucium*, *Thryptomene*, *Baeckea*, etc., the petals forming the outstanding display when the plant is in flower. However, after the petals have withered the calyx still carries a pleasing display until the seed ripens and falls—one seed per flower.

The best known of the species is *P. peduncularis*—"Copper-Cups". This plant inhabits the true sandplain (a fine sand with very fine particles overlying usually a gravel bed at depth from a few inches to several feet) and its range would be roughly from Great Eastern Highway to north of Carnarvon. In the more southern occurrence it is usually a fairly dense shrub to 2', of rounded appearance, which becomes a coppery-gold mass in August-October. The leaves are short and stubby and close to the stem. It will propagate fairly well from cuttings and even the tiny side shoots up to ½-inch root quite well. It is a brilliant flowering plant and when the main show of flower is over the calyx and the ripening fruits are quite showy until they fall.

North of the Murchison River there is an occurrence of this plant with rich red flowers, most dazzling. North of Carnarvon on the red sand dunes appears a form which is up to 6' high and about 8' across with coppery-gold masses of flower in August.

The next in order is *P. linearis*. I have only recently come across this one and the plants I found were windswept, a half-mile from the coast and of necessity only about 18" high and 5' across. The petals were almost white bearing a faint tinge of pink and the leaves were slightly larger than the previous species. It was equally attractive. It was growing on yellow sand dunes.

P. filifolius occurs further south, from Gingin north to the vicinity of the Murchison River. It grows on deep white sand, usually with *Banksia* and other coastal types. The plant is bushy at the base with the corymbose flower heads borne on woody bare stalks up to 2' and the whole plant not exceeding 4'. It regenerates from a woody stock after fire. Flowering time is October-January. Leaves resemble Geraldton Wax. The flower is much larger than the two first species, being up to 1-inch across and held face to the sun. The large petals, sometimes frilled, are a rich pink to geranium-red and are of the delicacy of fine silk. It is incredible that they should put on such a display in the heart of summer.

There is another form of *Pileanthus* which only grows on the top of red sand dunes above the Murchison River. It is reported to be a form of *P. filifolius*. I would say the resemblance ends with the flowers as the plant is like a very loose Geraldton Wax, slender and branching, with flowers in terminal groups. Flowering time is August-September when it is most attractive but rather colourless and lank at other times. A notable exception in the occurrence of this one was an apparent hybrid. The tall form was confined to a definite area of the rise and top of the dune, and below on the flat immediately adjacent was *P. peduncularis*—the normal form of "Copper-

