

Plant of the Week

Banksia serrata – Old Man Banksia

Old Man Banksia typifies the Australian sandstone flora probably more than any other Australian plant. Wonderful old trees with gnarled, corky bark can be found in scrub and woodland on sandy soils along the east coast of mainland Australia, from Queensland, through New South Wales and Victoria to Tasmania. And of course, who could forget Banksias as the “**Big Bad Banksia Men**” of May Gibbs’ “*Snugglypot and Cuddlepie*”.



Banksia serrata was one of the first plants collected by botanist **Joseph Banks** (later to become **Sir Joseph Banks**) on the shores of **Botany Bay** in April, 1770 when Banks accompanied **Lieutenant James Cook** (later to become **Captain James Cook**) on the first voyage of exploration to Australia in the *Endeavour*. In 1782 *Banksia* was named after Banks by **Carolus Linnaeus the Younger**, and since *Banksia serrata* was the first named species in the genus, it is known as the *type species*.

There are approximately 170 species of *Banksia*, all are endemic to Australia with one exception from New Guinea and a fossil from New Zealand. *Banksia* belongs to the plant family **Proteaceae**, a family of **Gondwanan** origins with main centres of diversity in **South Africa** and **Australia**. Other genera in the Proteaceae include: *Telopea* (Waratah), *Grevillea* and *Hakea* from Australia, and *Protea*, *Leucodendron* and *Leucospermum* from South Africa.



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