

Plant of the Week

Boronia



Boronia ledifolia

One of the great delights of bushwalking through Sydney sandstone woodland and forest, is to savour the lingering fragrance of *Boronia* and other closely related species. Not the fragrance

of flowers, mind you, rather the heady scent of aromatic oils released from crushed leaves.



Boronia pinnata

Boronia is included in the plant family **Rutaceae**, a seemingly odd mix of plants that includes *Citrus* (lemons, oranges, grapefruit, limes, kumquat and pomelo), tall trees of *Flindersia* (Australian teaks), *Murraya*, including not only *Murraya paniculata* the ubiquitous garden plant currently much beloved by landscape gardeners but also *Murraya koenigii*, the curry leaf plant, an essential ingredient in many Asian cuisines. The family name, **Rutaceae**, comes from the scientific name for rue, *Ruta graveolens*, a European herb sometimes endowed with mystical powers that could easily be expected to turn up in a *Harry Potter* novel. Wikipedia reports that “*In mythology, the basilisk, whose breath could cause plants to wilt and stones to crack, had no effect on rue.*”

It is difficult to understand why such a mix of herbs, shrubs and extremely tall timber trees, has been included in one family. However, all have one thing in common, aromatic oils in the leaves. Take the time to crush a leaf and smell it. You may never learn to love the smell of *Boronia*, but if you are from Sydney, it will always evoke fond memories of the Sydney bush.

Boronia ledifolia: en.wikipedia.org

Boronia pinnata: weblio.jp

Flindersia australis: flickr.com

Citrus: foodsubs.com

Ruta: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rue

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Flindersia australis



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Hard to believe the tall timber tree (*Flindersia australis*) that produced these “crocodile jaws” is related to *Citrus*, shrubs which have thick, leathery-skinned, succulent fruits. However, both have leaves with aromatic oils. Crush a leaf and try for yourself.



Citrus fruits

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