

Plant of the Week
*Ceratopetalum
gummiferum*
NSW
Christmas
Bush

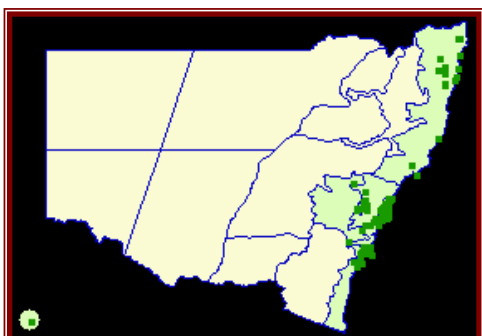


The scarlet flowers of the **New South Wales' Christmas Bush** must have reminded early European settlers of festivities back in their homelands. This lovely shrub is common on sandstones ridges and gullies around Sydney and can be found along the east coast of New South Wales. What we see are not **red petals**, they are actually **sepals**. In November, *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* produces tiny, white, short-lived petals and larger, creamy white sepals. After the petals fall, the sepals start to colour, eventually reaching the rich, brick-red with which we are so familiar at Christmas.

The **NSW Christmas Bush** is closely related to **Coachwood**, *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, common along waterways in gullies on the coast and ranges of NSW. Coachwood has been highly prized for its creamy timber and is used for seating in Courtroom Number Three of the High Court of Australia in Canberra. And the family, **Cunoniaceae**, is another with Gondwanan (southern hemisphere) origins. Other genera can be found in New Caledonia, New Guinea and New Zealand, southern South America and southern Africa.

Alison Downing & Kevin Downing, 13.xii.2010

(唐科文, 唐爱森 - 2010年xii月13日)



Downing Herbarium, Department of Biological Sciences

Photograph: Kevin Downing

Map:

<http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/avh/tmp/NSWsubmap05111139547.gif>

Australia's Virtual Herbarium,
accessed 28.xi.2010