

Plant of the Week

Syzygium wilsonii subsp.

wilsonii

Powderpuff Lillypilly



The **Powderpuff Lillypilly** is closely related to Eucalypts, Bottlebrush and Tea Trees, although at first glance you might not think so. All belong to the Myrtle family (**Myrtaceae**) and characteristically have oil glands in their leaves. However, Lillypillies are mostly found in tropical and subtropical rainforests and have succulent fruits rather than the dry, woody fruits typical of eucalypts. There are estimated to be about 500 species of *Syzygium* worldwide, about 50 can be found in Australia, in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, across the top of the Northern Territory and along the coast and ranges of Queensland and New South Wales. *Syzygium wilsonii* is endemic to the rainforests of far north Queensland between Ingham and Cooktown. Apart from hybrids, it is the only Lillypilly with crimson flowers.

Powderpuff Lillypilly has a marked weeping habit. In addition to the large clusters of crimson flowers produced in late spring and early summer, the young leaves can be pink, red, even dark crimson. Clusters of succulent white fruits follow the flowers. If you choose to grow this plant in your garden, consider planting it on a bank or retaining wall.

The common name “**Lillypilly**” is used for a number of closely related genera, including *Acmena*, *Eugenia* and *Waterhousea*. In south-east Asia, you may have tried ‘**Rose Apple**’ (*Syzygium jambos*). Probably the most important economic species in the family is the **Clove**, *Syzygium aromaticum* or **Cengkeh**, originally from Indonesia. The spice is obtained by drying the unopened buds of the Clove flowers.

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