

## OCTOBER PLANT OF THE MONTH

### *Syzygium wilsonii* 'Powderpuff lilly pilly'



Photograph by R Baxter

Photograph of flower  
& berries by L Smith

**Special attributes:** The spectacular cyclamen pompom flowers, the colour of the new growing tips and the white fruits make this a “stand out” garden specimen.

**Origin:** This plant occurs naturally in the rainforests between Mossman and Cardwell in north Qld.

**Form:** Other sub-species of *Syzygium wilsonii* are known but basically *S wilsonii* ssp, *wilsonii* is a shrub or small tree 2 to 6 metres high. In cultivation it grows 2 to 3 metres tall with weeping branches.

**Foliage:** The stiff, dark green leaves are about 150mm long while the shoots of the new foliage are an eye catching red to bronze.

**Flowering:** In spring and early summer clusters of large cyclamen pompom flowers, up to 100mm in diameter, and tipped with gold appear. The clusters are followed by white fruits, which are ovoid and around 15mm long.

**Suitability:** This is a reliable species for most temperate and subtropical climates. It prefers rich soils; moisture (but survived the Brisbane drought without watering); and sun or dappled shade. It makes an excellent feature plant for a large container. Like other species of *Syzygium* scale infestations are occasionally observed, these can be controlled by the use of white oil. It responds well to pruning.

An attractive hybrid of *S wilsonii* is *S 'Cascade'* which is suited to all but arid and very cold climates. This is a dense, rounded shrub to 2 to 3 metres tall with similar foliage to *S wilsonii* and has clusters of pink to lilac flowers followed by pink fruit.

**Availability:** It is available from Australian Native Plant Nurseries and possibly some general nurseries. Propagation is from cuttings of firm, current season's growth or from fresh fruits (seed). The fruits can be planted whole or after removing the flesh. Germination may be slow and spasmodic.

Photograph of *Syzygium 'Cascade'* by J Sked

