

## Plant of the Month - August

by Allan Carr

### *Hovea acutifolia*

### Purple Pea Bush/ Pointed-leaf Hovea

**Pronunciation:** HO-vee-a a-cute-i-FOAL-ee-a

FABACEAE

**Derivation:** *Hovea*, after Anton Pantaleon Hove, 19th-century Polish botanical collector for Kew Botanic Gardens (The genus was named by Robert Brown in 1812); *acutifolia*, from the Latin *acutus* – pointed, *folius* – a leaf, referring to leaves which taper to a point.



Habit



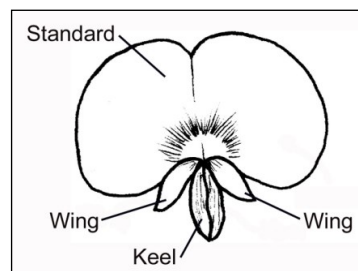
Leaves, flowers

There are 38 species of *Hovea* all endemic to Australia with the main representation east of the Great Dividing Range. They are all shrubs of various sizes with flowers that are usually profuse and conspicuous.

**Description:** *Hovea acutifolia* is a small to medium shrub to about 2 m found in a range of coastal and near coastal habitats from central-eastern Qld to northern NSW. It is most common in forests and woodlands growing on a variety of well drained soils in a shaded or semi-shaded position.

**Leaves** are alternate, to 70 mm x 20 mm tapering at both ends, dark green above and rusty-hairy below with \*recurved margins and a pointed apex.

**Flowers** have the typical pea form consisting of 5 irregularly shaped petals; the "standard", two "wings" and two lower petals joined along their upper edge to form the "keel", as shown in the diagram. They are about 10 mm across, pale mauve to bluish purple and usually borne in few flowered \*axillary \*racemes during the months from July to October.



**Fruits** are pods 15 mm long, faintly hairy and \*turgid. The young soft pods were eaten by Aboriginal people.

\*recurved = rolled under

\*axillary = arising from the angle between leaf and stem

\*raceme = an unbranched flower stem with flowers on stalks

\*turgid = swollen

Fruits