

PLANT of the MONTH

Blueberry Ash, *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*

A small tree or tall shrub, this evergreen species grows between 3-15m tall and 3-5m wide. It has a dense crown of foliage, and an approximately conical form. It survives well in low nutrient and dry soils. It grows in shade through to full sun.

The masses of white and sometimes pinkish flowers are arranged in rows along the branchlets. They are cup-shaped with a fringed edge and look somewhat like little ballet skirts.

The fruits are a stunning shade of bright blue, and resemble small (1cm long) olives. They provide food for many native birds.

Blueberry Ash can be found growing wild in the local forests and coastal areas. It flowers from October to January and fruits are held from April to October.



Black olive berry, *E. holopetalus*

Blueberry Ash can be used as a focal specimen tree for its flowers, fruit and foliage qualities. It also grows well in large tubs or containers.

After pruning, it will resprout thickly, making it an excellent hedging plant. The new growth is an attractive pinkish colour.

Propagation is best achieved using semi-hardwood cuttings from around February through the warmer growing season. Germination from seed can take up to two years. Fermentation can help speed up the process.

The flowers and fruits often appear on the plant together, so providing a stunning double display. This is a very rewarding and easy-to-grow addition to any garden.

A related species, *Elaeocarpus holopetalus*, Black olive berry, grows in high altitude rainforests of East Gippsland and in southeast NSW.