Ceratopetalum gummiferum - NSW Christmas Bush

Family:
Cunoniaceae

Common Name:
NSW Christmas Bush.

Distribution:
Mainly coastal New South Wales from Bateman's Bay north into the dividing ranges between NSW & Qld. In HSC; Communities O1 (107.9 ha), DF (15.5 ha), L1 (837.3 ha), Q1 (27.1 ha), Q2 (6.6 ha), A (5,579.4 ha), F (1289.6ha), S (62.3 ha) & B (93.4ha).

Derivation of Name:
Ceratopetalum; Latin, referring to the horned-like lobed petals (in one particular species), ceras= horned & petalon= a petal.
gummiferum; Latin, with reference to producing gum.

Conservation Status:
Adequately conserved in HSC. Highly susceptible to the root fungus, *Phytophthora cinnamomi.*

Description:
Small tree rarely to 10 m high in HSC, usually a multi trunked plant due to past bushfire disturbance and as such is generally around 5m tall; bark is light grey in colour and rough in appearance. The leaves are tri-foliar compound leaves which have a finely serrated margin; leaflets are up to 8cm in length and 0.5cm to 3cm in width. Abundant fragrant white flowers in early summer (November-December) are followed by the famously abundant red coloured, star shaped sepals housing the seed which are then shed in February when they turn a light tan colour.

Longevity:
Up to and beyond 100 years.

Horticultural Merit and uses:
A very popular plant used very widely in horticultural applications. Usually kept pruned to encourage thick growth and consequently heavier flowering. Rarely exceeding 5m in cultivation this plant requires well drained soils but must have regular moisture to flourish. Additional annual fertilising can also help promote thick growth. It takes either a full sun position or light shade and tolerates very slight frosts. This plant is very popular in the cut flower industry and is grown widely as a commercial crop as such.

Fauna Value:
Larvae of Dark Pencil Blue butterfly feed on foliage. Flowers provide resources for a wide range of invertebrates particularly bees. Fruit (seed) is consumed by parrots.