

Proteaceae (Banksia Species)

Information: 90% of all Banksia species occur in South Western Australia. The two most common Banksia species in the Perth region are the Firewood Banksia (*Banksia menziesii*) and the Slender or Candle Banksia (*Banksia attenuata*). These two species each flower throughout the two halves of the year and are an important source of food for countless animals. Large Banksias such as these as well as *B. grandis*, *B. ilicifolia*, *B. Prionotes* and *B. littoralis* produce an abundance of nectar from their large flower spikes that sustain countless species and have traditionally been used as a source of food and drink by indigenous Australians. Banksias are highly adapted to a nutrient poor environment with harsh, dry climate having sunken stomata to preserve water and cluster roots to enhance nutrient uptake in Phosphorus deficient soils.



Firewood Banksia (*Banksia menziesii*)
with parasitic 'witches broom' (insert)

Pictures by A. Price



Candle Banksia (*Banksia attenuata*)
feeding a Honey Possum (*Tarsipes rostratus*)

Picture courtesy of Kwongan Foundation



Bull Banksia
(*Banksia Grandis*)

Picture courtesy of Friends of Queens Park Bushland



Swamp Banksia (*Banksia littoralis*)

Picture by A.Price

Associated Life:

Many animals drink nectar from Banksia flower heads including Perching birds such as **Honeyeaters**, **Spinebills**, **robins** and **Wagtails** as well as the **Honey Possum**, the worlds only nectarvorious marsupial. **European Honeybees** are commonly found in or near flower spikes as are weevils and **jewel beetles**.

The seeds of the *B.grandis* are eaten by **Carnaby's black-cockatoo** and the **red-capped parrot**. The Twig-mound ant builds its nest at the base of *B. ilicifolia*. Some **moth** species larvae burrow into Banksia cones and leaves. Leaves of *B.menziesii* are often blistered with galls associated with a species of **mite** and witches brooms are commonly seen caused by the parasitic fungus **Phyllachora proteae**. Unfortunately, many Banksia species are very susceptible to the parasitic slime mould **Phytophthora cinnamomi**.