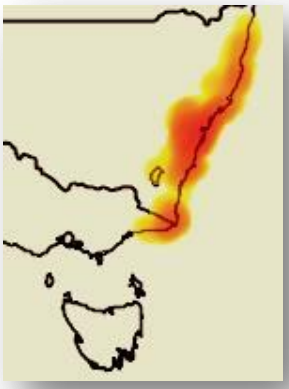
Persoonia levis Broad-leaved Geebung

Geebung is an unusual name derived from Aboriginal languages: *geebung* is the name used by the Dharuk in the Sydney Region, and *Jibbong* by the Wiradjuri[1]. The genus name *Persoonia,* to our ears, is also unusual until you find out that it is named after a Dutch mycologist (someone who studies fungi), Christiaan Hendrik Persoon. Geebungs are endemic to Australia and there are almost 100 species which, for the most part, are found in eastern Australia, and in the SW corner of Western Australia. They are mostly small trees or shrubs.

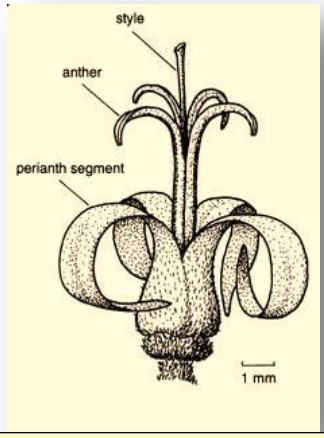


This particular species, *Persoonia levis,* common in Sydney bushland, grows along the central and north coast of NSW, and in the SE corner of NSW and NE corner of Victoria. We are accustomed to the subtle olives, blues, greys and yellowish greens of the foliage of the Australian bush but the Broad-leaved Geebung is quite a contrast with bright, apple green foliage. The fruits, too, are unusual, round and succulent, bright green colouring to purple, very different from the dry, hard fruits of other genera in the same (Proteaceae) family, for example, Needle Bush (*Hakea*), *Telopea* (Waratah),

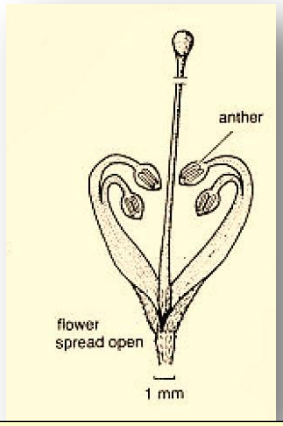
Grevillea and Woodly Pear (*Xylomelum*). Geebungs are also unusual in that they have seven chromosomes that are much larger than those of other Proteaceae[2].

Broad-leaved Geebung has papery bark that provides some protection from bushfires. Peel back the superficial burnt bark and you will find glorious, rich crimson beneath the blackened exterior. This species also has the potential to resprout after fires, and regenerate from seed.

The flowers of Geebungs (*Persoonia*) are very different from those of many of the relations in the Proteaceae family. Geebungs have clearly identifiable petals (technically *tepals*) and stamens whereas *Grevillea* has stamens that are fused to the inner surfaces of the petals (*tepal*)!



Flowers of *Persoonia* have 4 petals (*tepals*) and 4 stamens which are quite separate from the petals



Flowers of *Grevillea* also have 4 petals (*tepals*) and 4 stamens but each stamen is fused to the inner surface of a petal!

Flower diagrams modified from illustrations by Murray Fagg, Australian National Botanic Gardens, 2010, ParksAustralia, Canberra, http://www.anbg.gov.au/proteaceae/illustrations.html
Map modified from Atlas of Living Australia:
http://bie.ala.org.au/species/urn:lsid:biodiversity.org.au:apni.taxon:291918

[1] Australian National Botanic Gardens, (2007), Canberra, http://www.anbg.gov.au/apu/plants/persooni.html

[2] Ramsay, Helen P. (1963). "Chromosome numbers in the Proteaceae". *Australian Journal of Botany* **11** (1): 1–20.

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