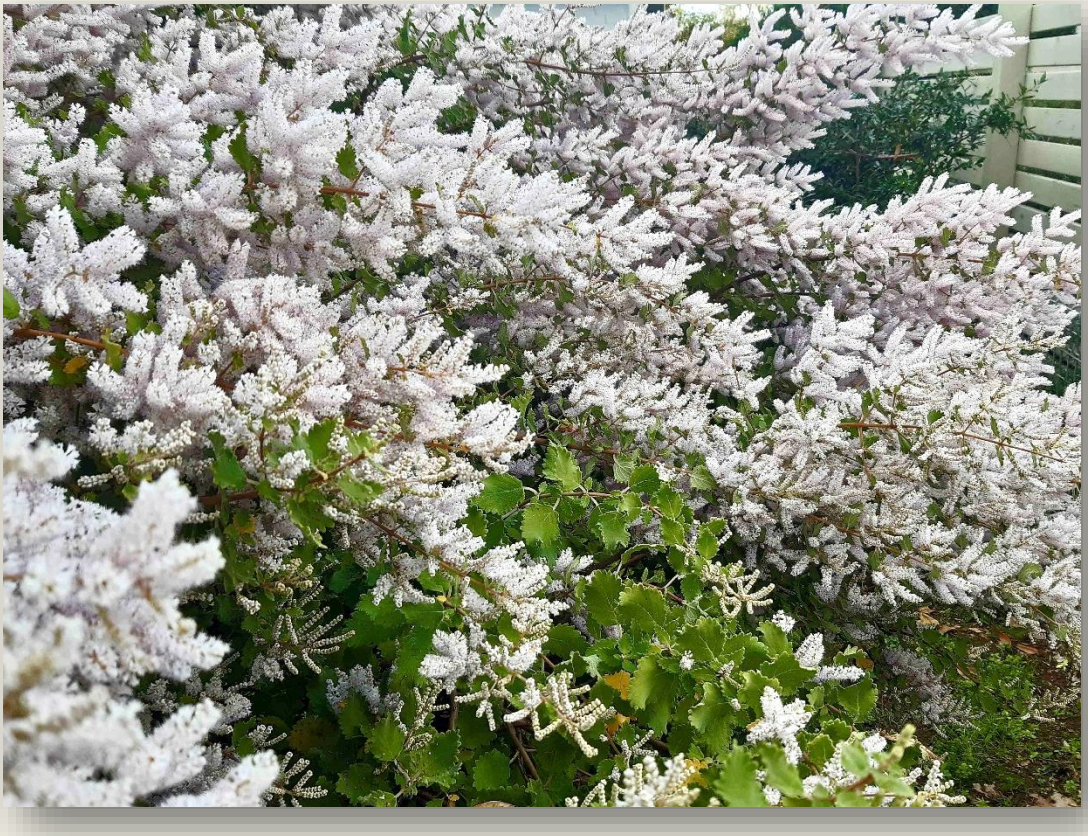

Tetradenia riparia

(Syn. *Iboza riparia*)

Misty Plume Bush

Misty Plume Bushes are flowering in Sydney right now, producing delicate clouds of eye catching, light greyish-white sprays. Once they were relatively common, now few and far between, easily overlooked when not in flower. In the past, we knew them as *Iboza riparia*, but they are now known as *Tetradenia riparia.* This is a wonderful addition to a garden as it flowers in winter when so many other plants are dormant.

This shrub with sticky, semi-succulent leaves is a native of southern Africa through to tropical east Africa, including South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe, where it grows on forest margins, in woodlands in dry valleys and along river banks; in South Africa it is known in Afrikaans as *gemmerbos* or *watersalie,* and in Zulu as *iboza* and *ibozane*. The genus *Tetradenia* is quite small, only known from Africa and Madagascar.

This is yet another member of the Mint Family, Lamiaceae, and characteristically has square stems and aromatic leaves, traits that we see in Australian species of Lamiaceae, such as *Prostanthera*, mint bushes and *Westringia*, the coast rosemaries.

Unlike most Lamiaceae, *T. riparia* produces male and female flowers on separate plants, and so is referred to as *dioecious.* Plants with male flowers produce more spectacular displays than female plants where the flowers are more compact and so it seems the male plants are more likely to be selected and propagated for garden planting.

In Africa, it is used as a traditional medicine for the treatment of a wide range of ailments, including respiratory problems, coughs, stomach ache, diarrhoea, angina, fever, malaria, dengue fever, headache, toothache and as a general antiseptic.

In 2018 the World Health Organisation estimated that more than 400,000 people worldwide died from malaria. Resistance to chloroquine which is used to treat malaria, has led to the investigation of other *natural* antimalarial resources. Essential oil from the leaves and stems of *Tetradenia riparia* have shown moderate anti-malarial activity against *Plasmodium falciparum*, a unicellular protozoan parasite transmitted to humans through the bite of a female *Anopheles* mosquito. Falciparum malaria evolved from a malarial parasite, *Laverania*, that is present in gorillas in western Africa, and it is believed that the protozoan that infects humans emerged about 10,000 years ago.

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