

ERIOCAULACEAE

Description: Small annual or perennial monoecious herbs; **stem** usually short; roots fibrous. **Leaves** alternate, sessile, usually forming a basal tuft; lamina linear-triangular to subulate, grass-like. **Inflorescence** a head-like cluster at the end of branches, usually longer than the leaves, surrounded by 1 or more whorls of bracts. **Flowers** very small, actinomorphic or zygomorphic, bracteate, unisexual, 2- or 3-merous. Perianth of 4-6 scarious to membranous tepals in 2 whorls, outer whorl larger and darker than inner whorl. **Male flowers** with stamens free, 1-6, opposite tepals; anthers basifixed, 1- or 2-locular, introrse, dehiscent by longitudinal slits. **Female flowers** with ovary superior, 2- or 3-locular, 2- or 3-lobed towards apex; ovules 1 per loculus; style single with 2 or 3 simple or 2-fid stigmatic branches. **Fruit** a membranous loculicidal capsule, opening by longitudinal slits; seeds 1 per loculus, globose to ellipsoid.

Distribution and occurrence: World: 13 genera, c. 1200 species, mainly tropical & subtropical regions, especially South America. **Australia: 1 genus, 20 species, all mainland States.**

ERIOCAULON

Description: Small herbs. **Inflorescence** not exceeding imbricate bracts. **Male flowers** with outer tepals inserted at base of floral axis; outer tepals free or fused; inner tepals inserted above on floral axis, reduced and 2- or 3-toothed, or 2 or 3 hyaline tepals, usually with small dark gland on inner surface; stamens usually twice the number of inner tepals; anthers often black. **Female flowers** with perianth absent or outer tepals 2 or 3, inserted at base of floral axis; inner tepals inserted above on floral axis, 2 or 3, usually erect, hyaline, sometimes with small gland on inner surface; ovary with simple style branches.

Distribution and occurrence: World: c. 400 species, mostly tropical & subtropical regions. Australia: 20 species (native), all mainland States.

Key to the genus <i>Eriocaulon</i>		
1	Female flowers with perianth absent and so ovary appearing to be distinctly shortly pedicellate	<i>Eriocaulon australasicum</i> ST
1*	Female flowers with 2 or 3 outer tepals and 3 inner tepals; ovary sessile	2
2	Leaves more than 20 cm long; inflorescence with scape at least 30 cm long	<i>Eriocaulon australe</i>
2*	Leaves up to c. 8 cm long; inflorescence with scape 1-2 cm long	3
3	Bracts of inner flowers with white hairs on outer surface towards apex, membranous; male flowers with inner tepals fused into a short obconical tube, tube more or less equal to lobes	<i>Eriocaulon scariosum</i> ACT, ST
3*	Bracts of inner flowers glabrous; male flowers with inner tepals fused into an obconical tube, tube much longer than lobes	<i>Eriocaulon carsonii</i>

Eriocaulon australasicum

Description: Small tufted herb. **Leaves** 2–5 cm long, 1–1.5 mm wide. **Inflorescence** ovoid to subglobose, 3–4 mm diam., with outer whorls of female flowers and inner whorls of male flowers. **Bracts** glabrous; outer bracts ± narrow-ovate; inner bracts ± linear. **Perianth** glabrous or absent. **Male flowers** pedicellate, perianth glabrous; outer tepals 3, oblong-spathulate, cohering at base; inner tepals fused into a 3-lobed tube; stamens 6. **Female flowers** without perianth; ovary sessile, but appearing shortly and distinctly pedicellate because perianth absent.

Flowering: summer.

Distribution and occurrence: Scattered occurrences known from near Braidwood (ST) and Pilliga National Park; a very early collection from 'Murray R.'; apparently very rare but may be overlooked by collectors. Also in Qld, Vic.NSW subdivisions: ST, NWP, SWP, SFWP. Other Australian states: Vic.

Eriocaulon scariosum

Description: Small tufted herb. **Leaves** 1.5-8 cm long, 1.5-2 mm wide. **Inflorescence** semiglobose to globose, 4-6 mm diam., a mixture of male and female flowers, or sometimes predominantly male or female. **Bracts** with inner surface glabrous; outer bracts obovate, scarious, soon +/- concealed on older inflorescences, outer surface glabrous; inner bracts obovate to spatulate, greyish, outer surface with short white hairs towards apex on outer surface. **Perianth** hairy. **Male flowers** stipitate; outer tepals 3, one tepal linear, other tepals spatulate, sometimes fused at margins; inner perianth shortly tubular, lobes 3, minute, each appressed to stamens; stamens 6. **Female flowers** with 2 or 3 irregular outer tepals, one tepal linear or absent, others oblong-spatulate, dark brown to black; inner tepals 3, inserted above on floral axis, narrow-oblong to spatulate, white, densely hairy on both surfaces; ovary sessile.

Flowering: Jan.-June.

Distribution and occurrence: Grows in bog communities and drainage areas, often in running water; inland to Gulgong area. NSW subdivisions: NC, CC, SC, NT, CT, ST, CWS. Other Australian states: Qld Vic.