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Plant of the month: Common Apple-berry *Billardiera mutabilis*



Common Apple-berry *Billardiera mutabilis* is a soft, creeping climber with reddish-brown stems and dull green leaves to 8 cm long with wavy margins. New growth and leaves are often downy. The pendulous flowers are yellow-green and bell shaped, with the petals recurved at the base; flowering mainly from September to January. The green fleshy berries are usually smooth and although edible when soft and translucent, are astringent to taste. Common Apple-berry is found in all the eastern States in heathland, woodland and forests from near sea-level to the subalps. At Venus Bay it is found along Anderson Inlet and Point Smythe and is common in the Tarwin Flora and Fauna Reserve. *Billardiera mutabilis* closely resembles *B. scandens* but this species is now thought to be uncommon in Victoria, found mainly in the north-east.



Common Appleberry grows in well-drained dry to moist soils with full sun to shade and is frost-tolerant. It is suitable for planting under established trees. The flowers (nectar) and fruits are bird-attracting. Seed is usually fermented before sowing and may take up to 3 months to germinate. Smoke treatment can enhance the process. Firm tip cuttings can be taken in summer.

Billardiera is a genus in the *Pittosporaceae* family and the name comes from the French Botanist J.J.H. de Labillardiere (1755-1834), noted for his descriptions of the flora of Australia. The species name *mutabilis* is a Latin word for changeable, referring to the flowers. For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.