



Plant of the month: Coast Banksia – *Banksia integrifolia*



Photo: Lorraine Norden

Coast Banksia *Banksia integrifolia* is one of the iconic tree species defining Venus Bay. It is an ornamental shade tree and windbreak, growing to 15 metres, although rarely reaching that height locally. It is also useful for stabilizing coastal erosion and likes well-drained soils. The dark green leaves have a silvery underside and although the name 'integrifolia' means that the leaves are smooth-edged when mature, they may be serrated or toothed on young trees. Attractive, long-lasting yellow flower spikes may occur at any time of year, but particularly February to September. The woody fruit-cones are held on the tree, providing added interest.

Both nectar from the flowers and seeds are important food sources for birds, particularly Honeyeaters and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, and mammals such as tiny Eastern Pigmy Possums and Ringtail Possums. Hollows in old trees are used for nesting sites, so it is critical to retain these as habitat where possible.

Aboriginal uses include nectar to make drinks, with the flower stamens being used for paintbrushes.

All Banksias are named after the famous botanist Sir Joseph Banks, who accompanied Captain James Cook on his first voyage to Australia. *Banksia integrifolia* is the major component of Coast Banksia Woodland, one of the two main Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) or plant communities on the peninsula. An example of Coast Banksia Woodland restoration may be visited at the Council Reserve on the corner of Canterbury and Louis Roads.

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