



Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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Plant of the month: Coast Daisy-bush *Olearia axillaris*



Coast Daisy-bush *Olearia axillaris* is a much-branched, erect, dense shrub that grows 1-2 metres high and 1-2 metres wide on the sand dunes of Venus Bay as well as those of all southern states. The white, cottony surface of the branches and underside of the leaves give the plant a distinctive grey appearance. The narrow, linear leaves have recurved or turned under margins, becoming smooth and dark green on the upper surface. The creamy, sessile (no stalk) flowers to 5-10 mm wide occur in the leaf axils, which is where the leaves join the stem, occurring from December to May. Unlike most daisy flowers the ray florets or 'daisy' petals are tiny and undeveloped so that they do not have the appearance normally associated with the daisy family.

Coast Daisy-bush is an interesting foliage plant with aromatic leaves. Another common name for *Olearia axillaris* is Wild Rosemary due to its appearance and fragrance and it has been used as a herb to flavour food. In cultivation it requires a well-drained, sunny position and is resistant to strong winds and salt spray. It is useful for soil binding and can be pruned as a hedge or screen. Propagation is from seed or cuttings.

The genus *Olearia* belongs to the large Asteraceae or Daisy family and is reportedly named after a German botanical author, Johann Gottfried Olearius, 1603-1671, although there are other suggestions that it may be after an Irish botanist, O'Leary, or be from the Latin 'olearius', from the olive. *Axillaris* refers to the placement of the flowers in the leaf axils.

For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.