



Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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Plant of the month: Coast Tea-tree *leptospermum laevigatum*



Coast Tea-tree *Leptospermum laevigatum* grows to a large shrub or small tree to around 5 metres tall and the same wide. The trunk is often gnarled and twisted, with the attractive bark fissured and fibrous. The leaves are flat, stiff and dull grey-green 15-30 mm long and 6-12 mm broad. The stalkless, white 5-petaled flowers occur from August to November, followed by small, woody flat-topped capsules that contain many seeds. It is common on the dunes of Venus Bay where it is native but it has spread beyond its natural range to become a serious environmental weed in parts of Victoria, including Wilsons Promontory and Wonthaggi Heathland, and in other parts of Australia. It should not be planted outside its natural habitat.

At Venus Bay Coast Tea-tree is most attractive when in flower and looks quite bridal as it covers the dunes in white in October. It may be heavily pruned for use as a hedge or screen and makes a good windbreak. It is very hardy, tolerating salt spray and frost; it prefers well-drained soil, full sun or partial shade. Propagation is

easy from seed shed once capsules are removed from the plant, or cuttings.



Coast Tea-tree belongs in the Myrtaceae family. *Leptospermum* comes from the Greek 'leptos' thin and 'sperma', a seed. The species *laevigatum* is from the Latin for smooth, referring to the leaves. Its common name is because early settlers used the leaves of some species as a tea substitute. For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.