



Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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Plant of the month: Coastal Greenhood *Pterostylis alveata*



All native orchids are protected in Victoria; their collection is illegal.

Coastal Greenhood *Pterostylis alveata* is a native orchid listed as 'vulnerable' in Victoria and known from only a few sites, including here at Venus Bay. It occurs on sandy soils close to the coast, usually under Coast Tea-tree or in Coast Banksia Woodland, in Eastern Victoria and New South Wales. Non-flowering plants have a rosette of up to 6 leaves, while flowering plants lack a basal rosette. The stems grow to 20 cm with up to 4 stem leaves and are topped by a single white and green flower, with the typical hood or galea formed by the dorsal sepal. The dark brown lip or labellum protrudes above the sinus or cleft where the upright lateral sepals join. Otherwise known as the Anzac Day Orchid, flowers occur from March to June depending on late summer to autumn rainfall.

Pollination of native orchids is usually by insects, mainly bees and wasps that are attracted by the smell, colour or shape of the flower. Thousands to millions of minute seeds develop in the ovary following pollination but only a

few of these germinate successfully.

Native orchids are under threat from development, land clearing, roadway maintenance, weed invasion, illegal collection, reduced rainfall due to climate change and grazing. About half the native species are in serious decline or threatened with extinction. Due to their seasonal appearance they can be missed at other times of the year. It is important to record and monitor sightings.

Greenhoods and all orchids belong in the large Orchidaceae family, containing almost 900 genera. The genus *Pterostylis* is from the Greek words meaning winged column (*pteron* – a wing, *stylis* – a column). The column is a structure formed by the union of the male and female reproductive parts.

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

