



Plant of the month: Dusty Daisy-bush – *Olearia phlogopappa*



Photo: Lorraine Norden

Dusty Daisy-bush *Olearia phlogopappa* is one of several *Olearia* species that grow naturally at Venus Bay, providing a spectacular splash of white on the dunes amongst the Tea-tree. It is a fast-growing, open to dense shrub, growing around two metres high and one to two metres wide. The oblong leaves have wavy, regularly toothed margins and are greyish-green and paler underneath. Masses of long-stalked white flowers with yellow centres grow in clusters from the leaf axils, where the leaf joins the stem, from August to January. Other *Olearia* species found locally are Coast Daisy-bush *Olearia axillaris*, Sticky Daisy-bush *Olearia glutinosa* and Snowy Daisy-bush *Olearia lirata*.

Dusty Daisy-bush withstands moderate frost or drought; it prefers a sunny or partly shaded position with some shelter, well-drained soil and benefits from pruning to promote bushiness. It is easy to propagate from seed or cuttings. The seed has a tuft of fine hairs attached to it called a 'pappus' that acts like a parachute and aids dispersion on the wind (similar to a dandelion seed).

Olearias all belong to the large daisy or Asteraceae family, with almost 1000 species found in Australia. This family of plants is very successful due to its adaptability to a range of environments and a high reproductive rate. Many introduced species in the daisy family have escaped cultivation and become environmental weeds; for example Gazania, Seaside Daisy and Arctotis are invading coastal areas like Venus Bay and should not be planted in our gardens. Common garden weeds like capeweed, dandelions, thistles and flat weeds can quickly colonise exposed areas of soil, so it is best to retain existing ground cover where possible, or mulch fresh garden beds to avoid weed infestation.

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