



## Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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### Plant of the month: Grey Mangrove *Avicennia marina* subsp. *australasica*



Grey Mangrove *Avicennia marina* is a stout, slow-growing, spreading shrub growing to 4 metres tall that has developed remarkable adaptations to growing in the salty tidal conditions. The lateral roots spread out horizontally in the water-saturated soil and breathing roots or pneumatophores grow vertically from them to provide oxygen to the



deeper roots. The shiny dark green leaves to 12 cm long are silvery below and can excrete salt from glands on their surface. Cream, scented flowers grow in small clusters at the ends of branches or in the leaf axils, mainly from January to March.

The seed germinates on the plant before falling to anchor in the sand. On Anderson Inlet the young plants can be seen growing where the seed is dispersed by the tide.



Grey Mangrove showing salt excretion from leaves

Grey Mangroves only grow in coastal shallows inundated at high tide. They provide habitat for fish nurseries, crabs, shrimp and mollusc species, protect the saltmarsh from storms and erosion, stabilise mud flats and filter run-off. Healthy mangroves mean a healthy ecosystem. The timber is rot and insect resistant, making it a valuable resource. Aborigines roasted and ate the fruit.

Mangroves belong in the Acanthaceae family. The genus *Avicennia* is named after a 10<sup>th</sup> century Arabian scientist and philosopher. Species name *marina* is from the Latin *mare*, for sea, referring to the habitat. Photos: Lorraine Norden.