



Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

ABN 17 536 241 485

PO Box 244 Venus Bay Vic 3956

Website: www.friendsofvenusbaypeninsula.org.au

Email: friendsofvbp@gmail.com

Plant of the month: Kangaroo Apple *Solanum aviculare* and *S. laciniatum*



The two common species of Kangaroo Apple, *Solanum aviculare* and *S. laciniatum* are similar large erect shrubs with angular stems and dark green foliage. The leaves have prominent midribs and are very variable, from simple lance-shaped to deeply-lobed, up to 30 cm long and 15 cm wide. *Solanum aviculare* has 5-petalled violet flowers, 2-4 cm across and deeply-cut between the lobes, from September to March, followed by orange-red to scarlet ovoid fruit. *Solanum laciniatum* flowers are bluish-purple, 3-5 cm across with frilled edges, followed by bright yellow-orange ovoid fruit. Kangaroo Apple plants are found in all the eastern states.

Kangaroo Apples are colonising plants: fast-growing, short-lived (5-6 years) and appearing after fire or on disturbed sites. They form an excellent screen or windbreak, can be used for erosion control and benefit from heavy pruning as they can become straggly with age. *Solanum aviculare* is more common along streams, while *S. laciniatum* will grow in a variety of well-drained soils. Fruits of both species are toxic when immature but were used as a food by the Aborigines when very ripe. The plants contain steroids that are used in birth control drugs. Propagation is from seed or cuttings.

Solanum species belong to the Solanaceae family, which includes potatoes, tomatoes and tobacco. The genus name *Solanum* is from the Latin *solamen* for solace, referring to the narcotic properties of some species. The species *aviculare* is from the Latin *aviculare*, a small bird and *laciniatum* is from *lacinia*, the flap of a garment, referring to the lobed leaves.

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

