



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: Karkalla *Carpobrotus rossii*



Karkalla *Carpobrotus rossii* is a succulent trailing plant with stems up to 3 metres long, growing as a front-line coastal species from Western Australia to Victoria and Tasmania. The grey-green leaves to 10 cm long are triangular in cross-section, with two sides longer than the third, a feature distinguishing the native plant from the two introduced species described below. Profuse purple flowers occur on short stems, to 5 cm across, shading to white at the base occur most of the year. The reddish-purple fruits are fleshy and globular, resembling small figs.

The two weed species, Angled Pigface *C. aequilaterus* from South America has leaves with equal sides and similar flowers with paler but not white bases, and Hottentot Fig *C. edulis* from South Africa has leaves with two sides shorter than the third and larger yellow flowers fading to pink with age.

Karkalla grows in well drained sandy soil, in full sun or semi-shade, from the coastal dunes to Coast Banksia Woodland. It makes a colourful ground display and is a useful soil binder and fire retardant species. Aborigines ate the fresh or dried fruits and the succulent, salty leaves. It can be propagated from seed or cuttings.

Karkalla belongs in the Aizoaceae family of plants with fleshy leaves and fruit. The genus name *Carpobrotus* comes from the Greek 'karpos' fruit and 'brotus' edible. The species name is after W. Ross, 1850-1914, a teacher at Bathurst Technical College. For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.