



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: Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*



Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa* is a hardy medium shrub or small tree growing up to 8 metres but at Venus Bay only to around 5 metres. Young plants have spines along the branches, helping to avoid predation from grazing animals until the plant is established and usually decreasing as the plant matures. Variable leaves grow up to 40 mm long and are wider towards the tips, which may be toothed. It produces clusters of sweet-scented, cream flowers from November to February (hence sometimes called 'Christmas Bush') followed by brown heart-shaped or purse-like capsules containing flat seeds.

Sweet Bursaria is a superb habitat plant. Not only does the dense, prickly habit provide webbing sites for spiders, protection and nesting sites for small birds that use the web material for building nests, the flowers are also a nectar source for birds, native bees, butterflies and many insects. It prefers full sun or light shade and well drained soils. An annual prune will maintain a bushy habit; it is suitable for hedging, either clipped or in its natural form. Propagation is from seed or cuttings.

Sweet Bursaria belongs to the Pittosporaceae family, of which another native species, *Pittosporum undulatum* or Sweet Pittosporum does not grow naturally in this area and has become an invasive environmental weed. The name *Bursaria* comes from the Latin 'bursa', a purse, referring to the shape of the seed capsules; *spinosa* is from the Latin 'spinus' or thorny, from the spiny branches.

Lorraine Norden (Dip. Hort.) For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.