



## Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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### Plant of the month: Variable Groundsel *Senecio pinnatifolius*



Variable Groundsel *Senecio pinnatifolius* is a perennial herb or sub-shrub growing up to 1 metre, with, as its name suggests highly variable, usually fleshy leaves that may be undivided or irregularly pinnate, with forward-pointing teeth along the leaf margins. There are several informal varieties of this species based on the variability of the leaves. The yellow daisy flowers, from September to April, have 5-14 ray florets. It is widespread at Venus Bay, from the saltmarsh at Anderson Inlet to the coastal dunes.

Senecios are also known as Fireweeds. They are pioneer plants, occurring on disturbed areas and following fire. Variable Groundsel makes a most attractive display, particularly when massed for full effect. The species tolerates sandy soils, salt spray, part to full sun and is propagated readily from seed.



Environmental weed

There are several local native varieties of *Senecio* but Variable Groundsel is the most common. There is another aggressive weed in the same genus, Purple Groundsel *Senecio elegans* that is also found at Venus Bay with distinctive purple daisy flowers with yellow centres. It is easy to remove and should be hand pulled whenever it is seen, with the flower and seed heads bagged to prevent ripening and spread.

The large genus *Senecio* belongs in the daisy or Asteraceae family. The name *Senecio* means 'old man' and *pinnatifolius* refers to the variously divided leaves. For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.