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Plant of the month: White Correa *Correa alba*



White Correa *Correa alba* is a dense spreading shrub that can grow to 1.5 metres in sheltered areas but is pruned by wind and salt spray close to the beach, growing naturally in primary dune scrub. The thick, oval leaves to 4 cm long are coated with a bluish-white bloom on the top and soft rusty hairs underneath, giving the plant a greyish appearance. The terminal white flowers on short branches from the leaf axils face up with a star-like appearance and flower most of the year, peaking June to October.

In cultivation White Correa is one of the best plants for a coastal garden. It is a hardy, salt and wind-tolerant shrub that likes well-drained soil and a sunny position for maximum flowering, although it will grow in the shade. It is a useful soil binder and makes an excellent low screen, which may be pruned as desired. The nectar-producing flowers attract honeyeaters. The leaves were used by the early settlers as a tea substitute. Propagation is easily done from cuttings.

Correas belong to the Rutaceae family, which also includes oranges and lemons. This family can be identified by the aromatic oil glands in the leaves, showing as dark spots and producing a distinctive aroma when the leaves are crushed. The genus *Correa* was named after a Portuguese botanist Jose Francisco Correa de Serra and the species name *alba*, from the Latin 'albus' white, refers to the white flowers.

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