



Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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Plant of the month: Sea Box *Alyxia buxifolia*



Sea Box *Alyxia buxifolia* is a dense compact shrub with milky sap that can grow to 2.5 metres but is often stunted and wind-pruned. The leathery, elliptical to obovate leaves are glossy dark green on top and paler below, growing up to 4.5 cm long x 2.5 cm wide. The flowers occur in terminal 8-flowered clusters with an orange tube and white petals, twisted sideways like a propeller, from spring to autumn. Flowers are followed by 1-2 orange to red fruit, often in pairs. Sea Box is found from Western Australia to New South Wales, including Tasmania. In Victoria it occurs on exposed coastal sites and at Venus Bay it is found along Anderson Inlet.

Sea Box can tolerate extreme coastal conditions of wind and salt spray. It likes well drained soil and a sunny position and is an excellent specimen plant for coastal gardens, or mass planted as a low hedge and windbreak. The plant is fragrant, bird and butterfly attracting and provides habitat and refuge for birds, lizards and small mammals. It is slow-growing and may be propagated from seed or cuttings.

Alyxia belongs in the Apocynaceae family. The genus name comes from the Greek *alyxis*, meaning a chain or an escape, possibly referring to the chain fruit or indicating the remote areas in which it is found. The species name *buxifolia* is from *buxus*, an ancient European Box tree and *folium*, Latin for leaf, indicating that the species has similar leaves. Photo: Lorraine Norden.