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Plant of the month: Prickly Moses *Acacia verticillata*



The most common form of Prickly Moses *Acacia verticillata* subsp. *verticillata* is an erect shrub or small tree 2-5 m high, with narrow phyllodes in whorls 12-25 mm long and with an acute point. Flowers are held in a cylindrical spike to 2 cm long, from June to December. It is widespread in southern Victoria and is also found in NSW and Tasmania. The other less common local form is *A. verticillata* subsp. *ovoidea*, which grows to 2 m high and has bunched or alternate phyllodes and ovoid flower heads less than 1 cm diameter. It commonly grows in coastal heathland or woodland and is also found in Tasmania and SA. Both subspecies are found at Venus Bay, mainly at Point Smythe.

Prickly Moses is very adaptable; it likes moist soils, including inundation but will tolerate periods of summer dryness and will grow in part shade. Prune to maintain bushiness. The prickly foliage provides an excellent refuge for small birds such as the Superb Fairy-wren. Aborigines used the fibre to make fishing line. Propagation is from treated seed.

Acacias or wattles now belong in the Fabaceae or Pea family. The genus *Acacia* is from the Greek for thorny or spiny. The species name *verticillata* means whorled and refers to the leaf arrangement. For further information please visit FVBP website above. Photo: Lorraine Norden.

