



Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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Plant of the month: Prickly Couch *Zoysia macrantha* subsp. *macrantha*



Prickly Couch *Zoysia macrantha* is a prostrate, mat-forming grass with upright leaves, spreading from 1-3 metres by deep underground rhizomes. The sharp-pointed flat leaves 2-4 mm wide, grow in two rows along the stem which is usually around 10 cm long but can reach 30 cm. The flower spike is a narrow spike-like raceme, often appearing dark and shiny, from September to March. It is common on the established dunes at Venus Bay and grows along the coast from South Australia to Queensland. There are two subspecies: the other one, *Zoysia macrantha* subsp. *walshii* has narrow leaves 1-1.5 mm wide, smaller flowers and is found in saltmarsh and on the edges of salt lakes. It is rare in Victoria.

Prickly Couch prefers moist, sandy soil. It grows in full sun and tolerates saline conditions. It is useful for soil binding and once established can suppress weed growth, making it an excellent choice for a native coastal lawn.

Zoysia belongs in the *Poaceae* or Grass Family. The genus name is after Karl von Zois (or Zoys) an 18th century Austrian Botanist. The species name *macrantha* means large-flowered. Photo: Lorraine Norden. For more information visit www.friendsofvenusbaypeninsula.org.au

