

Coastal Saltmarsh Plants in the Anglesea/Aireys Inlet area ... *Chris Morrissey* *Photos by Ellinor Campbell*

Coastal Saltmarsh is a flat area at sea level, often immediately inland from the coast and along rivers. We are fortunate to have two saltmarshes in our area, one at Painkalac Creek, Aireys Inlet and the other on the bank of the Anglesea River just near the township. These saltmarshes contain many interesting plants that are subject to frequent inundation of salt water and poor drainage, yet they survive and flourish.

Two common species that grow in this habitat along the water's edge are Sea Rush, *Juncus kraussii*, and Chaffy Saw-sedge, *Gahnia filum*.

The following four plants, and many others, grow next to the rushes and sedges.

Grass Daisy, *Brachyscome graminea*, (ASTERACEAE) *gramineus* – grass-like.

This trailing, perennial plant can grow to about 30cm high and has bright green, narrow leaves that grow in a tangled mass. It bears white or mauvish solitary flowers with bright yellow tubular florets in the centre. The species can cover large areas near the water, and the white flowers that appear in the summer are in stark contrast to the green foliage.



Grass Daisy, *Brachyschome graminea*

Creeping Brookweed, *Samolus repens* var. *repens*, (PRIMULACEAE) *samolus* – Latin for marsh plant, *repens* – creeping.

This is an attractive summer-flowering trailing perennial herb where the stems root at the nodes and can form lush mats metres wide. The basal leaves are thick and oval-shaped while the stem leaves are narrower. White to pink flowers appear either individually in the leaf axils or in terminal clusters from the trailing stems that can grow to 40cm long.



Samolus repens, Creeping Brookweed



Sarcocornia quinqueflora,
Beaded Glasswort

Beaded Glasswort, *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* subsp. *quinqueflora*, (CHENOPODIACEAE) *sarx* – flesh, *cornus* – horn, referring to the succulent segments.

This is a succulent, prostrate perennial herb with fleshy, green, cylindrical branches in segments. It has no leaves. It roots at the nodes and can form extensive carpets of vegetation. The tips of the branches are often reddish. The tiny flowers that appear in summer are embedded in the stem segments, and it is only the stamens and stigmas that are visible and exposed to the wind to assist with pollination. The rare and endangered Orange-bellied Parrots are attracted to the seeds of this plant. We were thrilled to have a confirmed sighting of this rare bird

near the Aireys Inlet Coastal Saltmarsh in recent times.

Shiny Swamp-mat, *Selliera radicans*, (GOODENIACEAE) named after Sellier, a French botanical engraver, *radicans* – rooting.

This is another creeping, perennial herb which roots at the nodes. The bright green, fleshy spoon-shaped glossy leaves vary greatly in size, 1-11cm long and 2-35mm wide. The distinguishing feature of these plants is the very small fan-shaped flowers that are white with mauve backs and yellow centres. The corolla splits open to display five joined pointed petals that spread like a hand. The flowers appear in early summer and are easily overlooked because of their size and closeness to the ground.



Selliera radicans, Shiny Swamp-mat

References: *Flowers of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet* – (ed) Margaret MacDonald
Flora of the Otway Plain and Ranges 2 – Enid Mayfield
Coastal Saltmarsh Plants in Victoria – Mary Ellis and Lorraine Norden

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