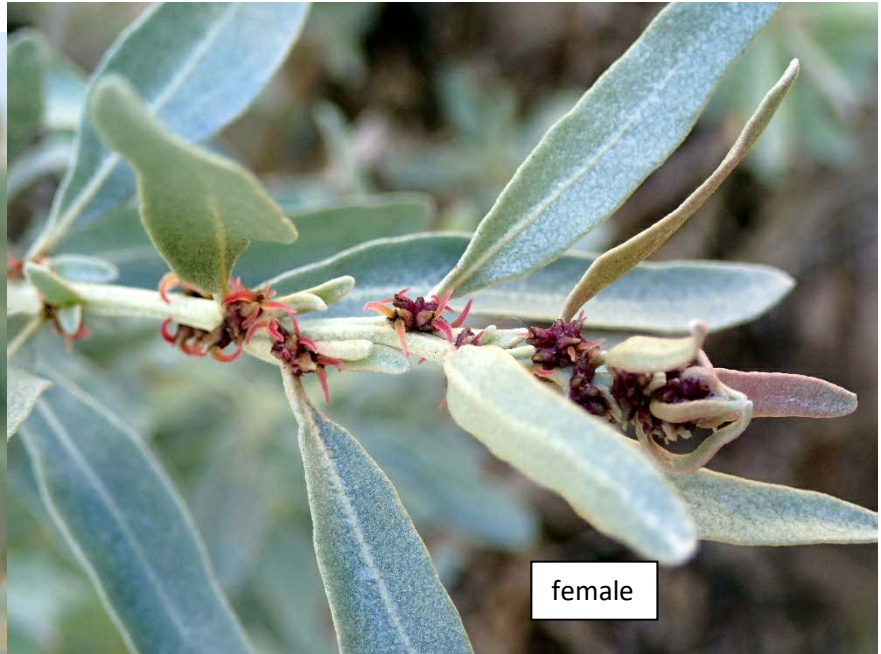


Plant of the month: Coast Saltbush

Atriplex cinerea



Male



female

Coast Saltbush *Atriplex cinerea* is a dense spreading shrub with brittle branches to 2 metres high. The oblong to ovate leaves to 8 cm x 2.5 cm are covered in downy hairs giving a silver-grey appearance. Male and female flowers generally occur on different plants (dioecious), with male flowers in purplish globular clusters and female flowers in leaf axils,

from September to March. The fleshy fruit follows in autumn. *Atriplex cinerea* grows in primary dune scrub and exposed shorelines, particularly in sheltered bays and inlets, in all Australian states. There are good examples at the base of O'Connor Road stairs also at the Finger Jetties near the Ramp Shed.

Coast Saltbush is a hardy shrub for exposed coastal gardens, tolerating salt winds and both waterlogging and dryness. Its attractive silvery appearance makes it ideal for a low screen. The leaves can be eaten as a green vegetable after cooking. Propagation is from seed.

The *Atriplex* genus belongs in the Chenopodiaceae or saltbush family, of which there are 22 species in Victoria, including some introduced species. *Atriplexum* is Latin for saltbush. The species name *cinerea* comes from the Latin *cinereus*, ashen, alluding to the colour of the leaves.

