

## *Caladenia latifolia*

### PINK FAIRY ORCHID

R.Br.

**Flowering period:** August–October.

**Description:** Clone-forming, herbaceous perennial to 30 cm high producing a single hairy leaf to 15 cm long each winter and spring from a deeply buried tuber. Flower colour varies from pink to white. Thousands of dust-like seeds are produced in a ribbed capsule.

**Pollination:** Specialised pollination by native beetles and bees.

**Distribution:** A widespread and common species of near-coastal areas from Kalbarri to Israelite Bay. Found growing in protected swales in deep leaf litter often associated with weeping peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) where the species can form large and extensive colonies. Species not tolerant of exposure to sea winds and salt spray.

**Propagation:** Difficult to propagate from seed without recourse to sterile culture facilities. The species also reproduces vegetatively producing up to three daughter plants per season under good growing conditions. With care may be readily propagated using vegetative means by harvesting daughter tubers during summer dormancy for planting out to restoration sites. Will also regenerate from seed once a colony has been established.

**Uses in restoration:** With their complex associations with mycorrhizal fungi and specialised pollination systems, orchids provide useful indicators of ecosystem health. A large and healthy population of the pink fairy orchid is a good indicator that the ecology of the area is in a stable state. Equally, orchids quickly vanish when dune sites become weed infested or are subjected to disturbance such as repeated fire.

**Notes:** A beautiful species often noticed in dune restoration programs and therefore useful to promote coastal restoration successes. Some skill is required in managing and propagating orchid species and specialist advice should be sought from Kings Park and Botanic Garden who operate orchid conservation and restoration programs.



Habit



R. Barrett

Flower



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Fruit



Distribution