

Olearia axillaris

(DC.) Benth.

COASTAL DAISY-BUSH

Flowering period: April–August in the Perth region.

Description: Erect, much branched, grey-green to white-grey shrub that is highly variable in form from 30 cm to 2 m high and covered in a fine felt-like material. Leaves alternate, white or grey on both surfaces or smooth above and grey below, 12–18 mm long, 2–3 mm wide. Flowers in dense heads terminating in short lateral shoots and produced in large numbers, often over half of the stem length. Flowering and seed set occurs very rapidly following opening rains with seed release as soon as 2–3 weeks after flowering. A surprising feature of the species is its ability to time seed release to coincide with soaking rains that may optimise seedling recruitment. Seed is fine with an attached feather-like appendage to aid wind dispersal resulting in the coastal daisy-bush being one of the most common and widely distributed species along the Perth coastline.

Pollination: Open pollinated by a wide range of opportunistic insect visitors; however, the high seed set of the species suggest that the flowers may also self-pollinate.

Distribution: Widespread and very common, often forming dense stands in primary to secondary dunes both in fully exposed to sheltered positions from the Pilbara coast to Israelite Bay and in all other southern Australian states.

Propagation: Easily grown from cuttings taken at any time of the year and also from seed sown into seed trays (after-ripening may be necessary to release primary dormancy) and watered to hold seed on the surface. Seedlings emerge after 14–21 days and can be pricked out into pots for growing on. Requires full sun conditions to ensure strong and robust growth otherwise plants may become weak and easily damaged if grown in partial shade.

Uses in restoration: One of the top five most useful species in coastal restoration programs with its broad soil and exposure tolerances, rapid growth and high tolerance to drought. Ensure plants have some protection when planted into highly exposed sites until hardened-off.

Notes: An attractive species with its white foliage for the home garden; however, requires regular pruning (only back to the last green leaf) to maintain shape as the plant can be vigorous under garden conditions. Also known as native rosemary.



Habit



Flowers



Branch with seeds



Distribution