

Fact Sheet Wetland Plants



Why are plants important?

Plants are a key component of all wetland habitats including lakes, estuaries, mudflats and saltmarsh. Plants and the habitats that they create act as shelter and food for invertebrates, fish and birds, they protect coastal communities from storms, they filter sediment out of the water and capture significant amounts of carbon, especially mangrove, saltmarsh and seagrass habitats. Below are some plants that you can find at our local Ramsar site - 'Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula'.



Chaffy Saw-sedge (*Gahnia filum*)

This leafy tussock can grow up to 1.2m high and has smooth to slightly rolled leaves with a reddish-purplish base. Their densely clustered flowering spikelets attract pollinators such as butterflies. Their large root system is important for protection from erosion and the large tussocks themselves provide shelter for small mammals and birds.

Shiny Swamp-mat (*Goodenia radicans*)

This prostrate ground cover only reaches 4cm high and 1.5m wide, creating a succulent mat. It has thick, shiny, spoon-shaped leaves with small, white to mauve coloured flowers that are fan-shaped. The mat-forming structure and creeping stems that root at the nodes make it a useful soil binder.



Shrubby Glasswort (*Tecticornia arbuscula*)

This is an erect shrub with many branches reaching up to 2m high and 2m wide. The succulent 'bead-like' stem segments ranging in colour from blue-green, grey-green through to orange. All Glassworts are an important food plant for the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot and many other birds who feed on the seeds in mid to late winter.



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Creeping Brookweed (*Samolus repens*)

This is a tufted, creeping herb that reaches up to 30cm high and 1.5m wide. It is typically associated with brackish saltmarsh areas where it can form large creeping mats. Flowering occurs over a long period, peaking in spring. Flowers can either be white or a pale pink. They grow in moist, sandy soils and are salt-tolerant.



Marsh Saltbush (*Atriplex paludosa*)

This is an open sprawling shrub that can reach up to 1m high and 2m wide. The narrow leaves are green and hairless above and whitish below. It produces male and female (creamy-green) flowers on separate plants for most of the year. It occurs around the margins of Swan Bay, Lake Connewarre and Breamlea.



Southern Sea-heath (*Frankenia pauciflora*)

This is a low spreading to erect small shrub reaching up to 30cm high and 1m wide. It has small greyish to yellow-green to mid green leaves and white to pale pink solitary flowers for most of the year. It is an important food source for the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot who feeds on the seeds in autumn to early winter.



Seagrass (*Zostera muelleri*)

Seagrass or Eel grass is a flowering plant that has adapted to living in seawater and is found all through Port Phillip and Swan Bay. They have long, linear leaves and roots along rhizomes. Seagrass meadows are important habitat for many invertebrates, fish and alga and birds like Black Swans. They are known to create strange 'seagrass balls' when the dead leaves wash on the shoreline.

