

## Plant of the Month - March

by Allan Carr

### *Carpobrotus glaucescens*

**Pronunciation:** car-po-BRO-tus glor-KES-ens

**Derivation:** *Carpobrotus*, from the Greek, *carpos* – fruit and *brotos* – edible; *glaucescens*, from the Latin, *glaucus* – bluish green.

**Coastal Pigface**  
AIZOACEAE



Flowers, leaves

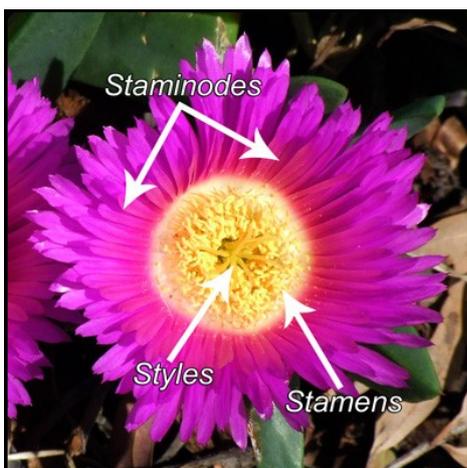


Habit (shown here with *Canavalia rosea*)

There are about 25 species of *Carpobrotus* worldwide, chiefly in South Africa. Australia has 4 indigenous species restricted to coastal situations except for *C. modestus*, an inland species. The coastal species are useful for sand dune stabilisation as they withstand extended dry periods and exposure to salt spray.

**Description:** *C. glaucescens* is a prostrate creeping herb with stems to 2 m long, rooting at the nodes and growing along shorelines and sand dunes from Rockhampton in Qld through coastal NSW and into Vic. *C. virescens* from WA is very similar and *C. rossii* from the south coasts of Vic, SA and WA also has fruit which was relished by Aboriginal people and early explorers.

**Leaves** are opposite, bluish-green, fleshy and triangular in cross-section to about 70 mm by 15 mm. They are edible when cooked but not highly regarded and were emergency food for Aboriginal people.



Flower parts

**Flowers** to 60 mm across have a daisy-like appearance with yellow stamens (300 to 400) and styles (7 to 10) at the centre of numerous magenta, petal-like \*staminodes (100 to 150). They can appear in most months but especially from September to May.

**Fruits** are deep-red fleshy berries to 30 mm by 24 mm crowned by the longest \*perianth lobes (2 or 3 horn-like extensions). The edible fleshy pulp of these fruits has a taste similar to a salty apple.



Fruit not yet ripe

\*staminode = a sterile stamen (male part of a flower)

\*perianth = the calyx and corolla of a flower, especially where the two are similar (calyx = the sepals of a flower collectively and corolla = the petals of a flower collectively)