

Plant of the Month - May

by Allan Carr

Canavalia rosea

Coastal Jack Bean

FABACEAE

Pronunciation: can-a-VAIL-ee-a row-ZEE-a

Derivation: *Canavalia*, from *kanavali*, the native name in Malabar (SW India) of the type species; *rosea*, from the Latin, *roseus* – rosy (pink).



Leaves, flowers



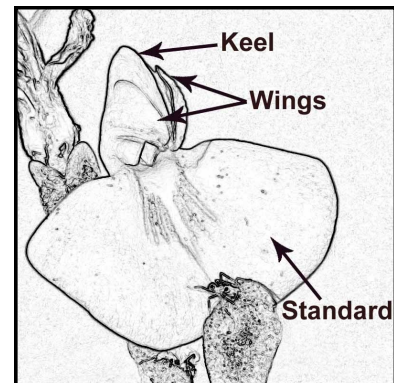
Flowers, raceme of buds

Canavalia, a genus of about 50 species is distributed in tropical and subtropical parts of the world with 3 species extending to Australia. *C. rosea* is found on tropical and subtropical seashores around the world including those of Qld, NSW, NT and WA.

Description: *C. rosea* is a large trailing or climbing vine several metres long, found sprawling over sandy soil or other vegetation just above the high water mark and on sand dunes. Young growth is silky-hairy.

Leaves are alternate and *trifoliolate with dark green, leathery, oval-shaped leaflets to 120 mm x 100 mm.

Flowers up to 20 mm across occur sporadically throughout the year but most often from March to July. These rosy-pink, pea-shaped flowers are in clusters on *racemes from 150 mm to 300 mm long. They have an upwardly curved keel and a spreading standard.



Fruits are thick, flattened, fleshy pods to 150 mm x 25 mm ribbed around the edges. These green pods turn brown when mature and release 4 to 10 brown to black seeds that remain viable after floating in salt water. Seeds and young pods were eaten by aboriginal people after thorough cooking.



C. rosea is a food plant for the larval stages of these butterflies: Purple Cerulean (*Jamides phaseli*), Spotted Pea-blue (*Euchrysops cnejus*), Tailed Pea-blue (*Lampides boeticus*) and Common Grass-blue (*Zizina labradus*).

*trifoliolate = having three folioles (a foliole is a leaflet)

*raceme = an unbranched flower stem with flowers on stalks

Fruits, leaves, flowers