

Peppy Plants April 2012

by Eleanor Bennett

The Salt Bush that we see growing in isolated patches along the foreshore at Peppermint Grove Beach is ***Atriplex isatidea***, commonly the **Coast Saltbush** (see also [Atriplex isatidea](#)). ***Atriplex*** is the name used by Pliny for Mountain Spinach, **Atriplex hortensis* an introduced plant known locally as Garden Orache. Pliny was a Roman author and naturalist who lived between 23AD and 79AD. ***isatidea*** is from the Greek *isatis* the name of a plant producing woad, which is the blue dye produced from its leaves.

Atriplex isatidea is recorded from scattered locations along the coast from Onslow in the north to east of Great Australian Bight in the south. This is a shrub that can reach up to 2.5m tall with thick, silvery- scaly leaves. It has separate male and female flowers which can occur on the same plant, or on separate plants and occasionally within the same flowering head.



The photograph above illustrates the grey- silvery colour of the plant.



The thick silvery coloured leaves are up to 10cm long and 5cm wide.

The male flowers are in dense, globular clusters along the flowering branch.



The photograph above also shows the anthers of the male flowers protruding beyond the clusters.

The shape and appendages of the fruit are the easiest way to distinguish *Atriplex* species. Each fruit consists of 2 bracts which in *Atriplex isatidea* are broadly triangular with 2-4 warty appendages.



Warty appendages



Seed

2 bracts

The seeds of the plant are enclosed in and protected by the bracts.