

Peppy Plants May 2014

by Eleanor Bennett

Previously I have written about the pink flowered, native *Carpobrotus virescens*. There is another *Carpobrotus* species growing near the mouth of the Capel River. It is weed from South Africa with yellow flowers that fade to a pinkish colour but not the brilliant pink of the native species. **Carpobrotus edulis* is commonly known as Pigface or Hottentot Fig (see also [Carpobrotus edulis](#)). *Carpobrotus* comes from the Greek carpos meaning fruit and brotus meaning edible; *edulis* from the Latin meaning edible in reference to the fruits of some species which can be eaten. It is a ground hugging shrub that can reach over 1.5m in length, with 3-angled, succulent leaves. The leaves can be over 10cm long and over 1cm wide with the lower angle minutely toothed towards the base. The yellow flowers are up to 8cm across, with 4-5 sepals. The flowers have no petals, but the staminodes (which are petal-like sterile stamens) give the flower its colour. Inside the staminodes there are more than 150 free stamens in 4-6 whorls. The 10-14 free styles occur in the centre of the flower. The fruit is yellowish, fleshy, and globular up to 3cm wide with the outer sepals spreading.



A typical spreading plant of **Carpobrotus edulis*.



The 4 sepals are obvious in this bud; the papery margins of the inner pair of sepals can be seen covering the emerging flower.



The single yellow flower occurs at the end of a branch.



The fleshy leaves are opposite and triangular in outline.



This photograph shows the many yellow petal-like staminodes, the numerous stamens and the paler curled styles in the centre of the flower.