

Peppy Plants June 2012

by Eleanor Bennett

Another introduced plant that is common along our coastline is **Tetragonia decumbens*, Sea Spinach, a native of South Africa (see also [Tetragonia decumbens](#)). **Tetragonia** is derived from the Greek, **tetra** meaning 4 and **gonia** corner, referring to the shape of the fruit; and **decumbens** from the Latin meaning reclining, relating to its spreading habit. It can occur just above the strand line and into the coastal heath and scrub.

**Tetragonia decumbens* is recorded also in South Australia and Victoria. It is a ground-hugging, succulent shrub up to about 30cm tall but with a spread of over a metre. It has obvious warty cells on the surface of the leaves. The flowers are typically yellow, on warty stalks, with 2-5 together in the upper leaf axils. *Tetragonia implexicoma* is a native species which as yet has not been recorded at Peppy Beach, but it has 2 or 3 styles whereas Sea Spinach has 4 styles at the top of the ovary. The fruit is dry and 4-winged.



Low, spreading shrub over 1m in width.



Succulent leaf showing surface covered in glistening warts.



This photograph of a single flower illustrates it has no petals, about 20 stamens and 4 stigmas (in the centre of the flower).



These immature fruits are covered in glistening warts. They will change from the red colour to brown when mature. The wings on the fruits are obvious in this photograph.



Flowering branch with the flowers in the leaf axils