

COAST WATTLE

at Nine Mile Beach

THE AIM OF THIS FACT SHEET IS TO CLARIFY ISSUES WITH REGARD TO COAST WATTLE AT NINE MILE BEACH IN RELATION TO ITS:

COMMON AND SCIENTIFIC NAME

ORIGIN

RECOGNITION AND
POTENTIAL FIRE HAZARD

RECOGNITION

Many plants can exhibit a degree of variation between individuals of the same species and this can sometimes be confusing when attempting to identify a species. Some such variation is present in **COAST WATTLE** at Nine Mile Beach.

Typical **COAST WATTLE** can be recognised by the following characteristics:

Seed pods	Commonly coiled or contorted
Leaf (or phyllode)*3):	
Shape	Broadest part of the leaf is in the upper half
Length	5 – 12 cm
Width	10 – 30 mm
Veins	2 - 4 prominent primary veins



COAST WATTLE (*Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae*) - Photo 4: Leaves (phyllodes); Photo 5 (inset): Seed pods

Notes

*1 There are two subspecies of *Acacia longifolia*. These are *Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae* and *Acacia longifolia* subsp. *longifolia*. However, some authorities consider these subspecies to be two distinct species. Furthermore some plant nurseries sell COAST WATTLE as *Acacia sophorae*.

*2 Biodiversity, or biological diversity, is the variety of all life forms. It includes genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.

*3 The 'leaves' of many wattles are not true leaves but 'phyllodes' which are technically defined as 'an expanded, leaf-like petiole (or leaf stalk) lacking a true leaf blade'.

References and Further Information:

- Australian Native Plants Society: <http://anpsa.org.au>
- *Flora of Australia. Volume 11b. Mimosaceae, Acacia Pt 2.* Melbourne: ABRS/CSIRO Publishing (2001).
- Wapstra, H., Wapstra, A. & Gilfedder, L. (2005) *The Little Book of Common Names for Tasmanian Plants.* Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Tasmania.

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COMMON AND SCIENTIFIC NAMES

COAST WATTLE is a dominant shrub, or small tree, at Nine Mile Beach. Its scientific name is *Acacia longifolia* subspecies *sophorae**¹ (photos 1,4 & 5). Locally, many people also refer to **COAST WATTLE** as 'boobialla' and, mistakenly, as 'kerosene bush'.

The common names in capital letters used in this fact sheet are in accordance with "The Little Book of Common Names for Tasmanian Plants", published in 2005. The aim of this book was to standardise usage of common names and help avoid confusion when plants are known by more than one common name.

COAST WATTLE is often called 'boobialla' and this has probably been the greatest source of confusion as there is another native coastal shrub called **COMMON BOOBIALLA** (Scientific name: *Myoporum insulare*) (photo 2). **COMMON BOOBIALLA** also occurs at Nine Mile Beach but it is much less abundant, although it is similar in overall shape, or form, to **COAST WATTLE**.

COAST WATTLE is also mistakenly referred to as 'kerosene bush'. However, 'kerosene bush' is sometimes used as the common name for a plant in the daisy family that is abundant in bushland around Swansea. Its standardised common name is **BUTTONLEAF EVERLASTINGBUSH** (Scientific name: *Ozothamnus scutellifolius*) (photo 3). It has a very different form to **COAST WATTLE** and **COMMON BOOBIALLA** and it is unlikely to be present at Nine Mile Beach.

ORIGIN

COAST WATTLE occurs naturally in Tasmania (including, presumably, at Nine Mile Beach) and coastal areas of south-eastern mainland Australia.

It has become particularly abundant at Nine Mile Beach following aerial seeding during the 1970s. The aim of this seeding exercise was to stabilise the shifting sands with a locally occurring species, which was obviously successful. However, the origin of the seed is unknown and it is unlikely to be local provenance seed – that is, collected locally. Since then it has possibly hybridised with locally occurring **COAST WATTLES**.

We have learnt much since then and today the introduction of a species into an area from non-local provenance seed is recognised as inappropriate for the conservation of local biodiversity*². However, the presence of a non-local provenance species, but still a native one, should not necessarily be viewed as 'bad'. It is useful in providing shelter habitat for native animals as well as preventing excessive sand erosion.

However, if these plants are viewed by landowners as undesirable, they could be replaced in a strategic way. Clearing of **COAST WATTLE** should be localised or gradual with immediate re-planting of local provenance native plants. These could include the **COMMON BOOBIALLA** or other locally occurring plants that perform similar ecological and/or social functions.



Photo 1: **COAST WATTLE**
(*Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae*)



Photo 2: **COMMON BOOBIALLA**
(*Myoporum insulare*)



Photo 3: **BUTTONLEAF EVERLASTINGBUSH**
(*Ozothamnus scutellifolius*)

POTENTIAL FIRE HAZARD

Fire is a natural process that many Australian native plants have evolved to cope with and, indeed, some rely on fire for regeneration. Mass germination of seeds often occurs following a fire event and this is the case with many wattles.

At Nine Mile Beach the risk of fire can be high for a large part of the year and this presents us with a dilemma. How do we preserve the natural values that attracted us to the area in the first place but, at the same time, keep ourselves and our properties safe from fire? This dilemma can be partly addressed through appropriate garden design.

When designing gardens in fire prone areas **COAST WATTLE** and **COMMON BOOBIALLA** do not have to be completely avoided, but, the Tasmania Fire Service advises that they should not be planted adjacent to dwellings. Also consider the advice of the Australian Native Plants Society: **"All plants, whether they are exotic or Australian, will burn when subjected to sufficient heat"**.

Further information can be found in the following brochures:

- Guidelines for development in bushfire prone areas of Tasmania http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/publications/Bush_Guide.pdf
- Fire resisting garden plants for the urban fringe and rural areas <http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/userfiles/stuartp/file/FireResistingPlants2010.pdf>
- Nine Mile Beach – A Guide to Living at Great Oyster Bay Estate & Dolphin Sands http://www.gsbc.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Guide_to_Living_at_Nine_Mile_Beach_2009.pdf