

Peppy Plants May 2013

by Eleanor Bennett

Over the Easter break the **Coastal Daisy Bush** (*Olearia axillaris*) was in full flower and should still be flowering well into May as it is recorded flowering in autumn and winter (see also [Olearia axillaris](#)). *Olearia* is named after German botanist Adam Olschlager, (1603-71) who latinised his name to Olearius, and **axillaris** is from the Latin **axilla** meaning arm-pit, but in botanical terms it means growing from the axil between the leaf stalk and the stem. *Olearia axillaris* is a shrub that can grow up to 2m tall in protected areas with greyish narrow leaves up to 2cm long and 4mm wide. The upper surface is cob like hairy and the under surface is grey to cream with dense wool. The axillary flower heads are white to cream, up to 5mm across. There are less than 5 outer flowers, either without or with a very short petal-like structure, and less than 10 central, tubular flowers. It is common in coastal sands from Kalbarri in the north, east through South Australia, Victoria and into New South Wales. It also occurs in Tasmania. William Dampier (1652-1715) named Rosemary Island off Dampier, probably because this plant reminded him of the English Rosemary. It is believed that William Dampier and Willem de Vlamingh and their men ate this plant adding to their onboard diet.



The greyish white colour of the *Olearia axillaris* shrub is obvious against the green of *Acacia* species.



The small, few flowered heads occur in the leaf axils.



The white cob web like hairs are obvious on the upper surface of these leaves



The fruits often retain the old flowers as obvious in this photograph. The pappus (tuft of hairs above the ovary) are numerous and assist with seed dispersal