

U3A Port Fairy

Yellow Daisies of Port Fairy

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There are a lot of daisies flowering in Port Fairy and they all have their own little story to tell.

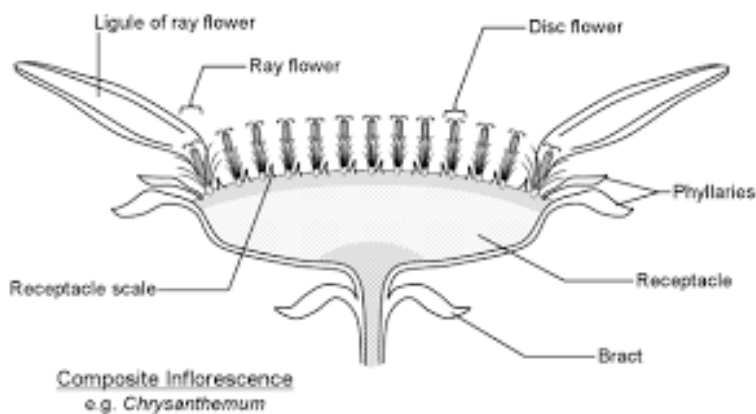
Today we will discover some of the delights of a few of the common yellow flowering species we see every day around Port Fairy.

What is a daisy?

The daisy family – **Asteraceae** – with around 24,000 species, is the largest family of flowering plants in the world. Almost 70 species of daisy, half of which are introduced and generally weedy, have been recorded in the Port Fairy area.

Because they are so common, we probably all know how to recognise a daisy, but what is it that makes a daisy a daisy?

- A daisy “flower” is actually comprised of a number of individual flowers (or florets) clumped together in a single head. The family used to be called **Compositae** in recognition of the flower head being a composite of many individual flowers.
- Each daisy head is surrounded by bracts that hold the head together.
- Each individual flower, or floret, has five tiny petals.
- Some daisies have only tubular florets (disc florets).
- Some daisies have only strap (ligulate or ray) florets.
- Some daisies have a mixture of strap florets around the rim of the head and tubular florets on the disc – the “typical” daisy flower.
- Lots of daisies have a white fluffy or umbrella shaped structure attached to the seed, called a **pappus**, which acts like a parachute and helps the seeds disperse on the wind.



A few of the common Port Fairy yellow daisies

Flatweed
Hypochoeris radicata



Flatweed is a common weed in lawns and roadsides. It can be recognised by the rosette of leaves flat on the ground from which springs a branched, leafless flower stalk.



A closer inspection of the leaves shows they are covered in stiff hairs.

The bracts sit close to the flower head and are not reflexed.



Dandelion
Taraxacum sp.



Like Flatweed, Dandelions are also a weed and also have a rosette of leaves flat on the ground but can be distinguished by their leaves which have pointy segments and are hairless.



But the simplest way to identify Dandelions is by the reflexed bracts below the showy yellow florets.



Capeweed
Arctotheca calendula



Capeweed is extremely common and very recognisable. It has a rosette of lobed leaves but instead of the flower head being entirely composed of strap florets, Capeweed has a row of radiating bright yellow strap florets around the rim of the flower head which surround the tubular disc florets.

Capeweed is distinguished by being the only daisy in Victoria to have tubular florets black petals.



Variable Groundsell
Senecio pinnatifolius



Variable Goundsell is a showy native species which is very common on the dunes along the beaches

The leaves of Variable Groundsell, which as its scientific name implies, are divided into narrow segments (pinnate) a bit like a fern, are distributed along the stem. It does not have a rosette

Like Capeweed, it has a row of strap florets around the rim of the flower head but the disc florets are clear yellow.



If you look closely you will also see small dark dots on the lower part of the bracts

Smooth Hawksbeard
Crepis capillaris



During spring the paddocks around Port Fairy are dominated by Smooth Hawksbeard. It grows about 1m tall



Like Flatweed and Dandelion, the flower head of Smooth Hawksbeard is comprised entirely of strap florets.



Gazania
Gazania linearis



Gazanias are common along Ocean Drive and other sandy areas around Port Fairy. The flower is quite variable in colour and form but many of them can be recognised by the dark ring or moroonish stripes on the predominantly yellow petals. on the lower y are quite



The young leaves of some Gazania plants are covered with a white woolly hairs. Over time the hairs rub off and so older leaves become dark green and shiny.

Gazania is now a major weed in Victoria and is very common along roadsides in the Mallee and Wimmera where it can put on a spectacular colour show.



Dune Thistle
Actites megalocarpus



Dune Thistle, despite its name and appearance is a native species – one of the few natives to have entirely strap petals.

It is never all that common but can be found on most of the primary dunes around Port Fairy.

Its most distinctive feature is the bluey-grey, lobed and slightly prickly leaves which occur as a loose rosette in young plants and then extends to the stems as the plant develops.



The bluish appearance of the leaf is due to the presence of a wax on the leaf surface

Ox-tongue
Helminthotheca echioides



Ox-tongue is another of the strap petal introduced daisies. In our area it is most common on the basalt soils around Koroit and growth thickly on disturbed roadsides and drains.



It gets its name from the short stiff hairs on its leaves which make it feel rough and a bit like a cows tongue.



The individual hairs sit on top of a small whitish pimple which makes the plant pretty easy to identify.

Safron Thistle
Carthamnus lanatus



Safron Thistle is the only yellow flowered thistle to be found around Port Fairy. It can be identified by the very sharp spines both on the leaves and around the flower head.



The pappus of the seeds of Safron Thistle are comprised of flattened scales rather than the fine woolly pappus of all of the other spces

Sow Thistle
Sonchus oleraceus



SowThistles will be one of the most recognisable yellow diasies for gardeners. It grows just about anywhere there is disturbed soil or gravel. In flower beds, paths, roadsides, plant pots – just about anywhere you don't want it.

It has a number of readily recognised features including pointy-lobed leaves that clasp the stem, often a reddish stem and, when the stem is broken or a laf pulled off it exudes a whit milky juice.



Sow Thistle is closely related to Lettuce and, within the daisy family, they are both in the Lactuca Tribe – daisies that exude the white milky sap.

Water-buttons
Cotula coronopifolia



As the name implies, Water-buttons is always found on the edge of lakes, dams and other waterways. It is very common near the jetty at Lake Aringa.

The flower head of Water-buttons is comprised only of tubular florets.



Plus, it does not have a white woolly papus but instead has winged seeds.

Another weed unfortunately but quite attractive when in full flower.

Annual Fireweed
Senecio glomeratus



Annual Fireweed is a native daisy that occurs in a wide variety of environments throughout southern Victoria.

Senecio species are often referred to as "fireweeds" as they tend to grow quickly following disturbances, in particular fires. So they are often found near roads and tracks in the bush.



It is in the same genus as Variable Groundsell (page 3) but differs in a number of characteristics the most obvious of which is the lack of strap florets.

The leaves have pointy lobes but are not prickly like a thistle and the undersurface is covered by a tangle of cobwebby hairs.



So, keep your eye out for the daisies of Port Fairy, there are plenty around.