


# WEED: Myrtle-leaf milkwort

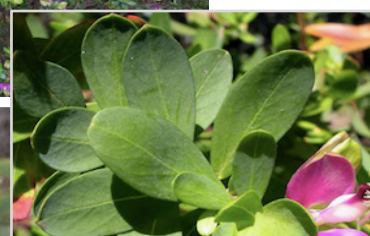
## *Polygala myrtifolia*

Shrubs

HABITAT	Dune strandline	Foredune	Hinddune / forest	Headland	Riparian / wetland gully		
<b>Other names</b>	Polygala, butterfly bush, parrot bush, sweet pea bush, Bellarine Pea						
<b>Origin</b>	South Africa						
<b>Family</b>	Polygalaceae						
<b>Habit</b>	Erect shrub, usually 1–2.5m tall, densely leaved						
<b>Habitat / threat</b>	Invades intact vegetation forming dense stands, eventually dominating the shrub layer. Establishes in dune systems, back (or rear) dunes and near-coastal shrub-lands, coastal bluffs and woodlands. Fast growing, competing with coastal wattle <i>Acacia longifolia</i> var. <i>sophorae</i>						
<b>Leaves</b>	Alternately arranged elliptical leaves (1-5cm long and 6-15mm wide), rounded tips, relatively broad, thick and leathery, borne on very short stalks. Stems hairless or with fine curled hairs						
							
<b>Flowers</b>	Flowers throughout year, peaking September–October. Can flower and seed when less than 50 cm high, about 2 years old.						
<b>Fruit/seed</b>	Fruit is a small rounded capsule (8-10mm across). Seeds germinate in shade and full sun, mainly in May–June, but all year if sufficient moisture, and prolifically after fire, soil or canopy disturbance.						
<b>Weed removal technique</b>			Follow-up as seeds viable in soil 2-3 years (possibly 10)				
Hand-weeding	Seed head removal	Cut and paint	Scrape and paint	Mattock / Digging	Crowning Skirting	Biological control	Herbicide use



◀ Habit  
▼ Leathery leaves



◀ Seedling  
▼ Flowers bright pink to pale purple (1-2cm long), resemble pea flowers — two spreading side 'petals' and a folded lower petal that is finely-branched at its tip.



### NATIVE LOOK-A LIKES: (see distinguishing feature overleaf)

NATIVE common name	NATIVE species name
Coast teatree	<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i> (also see species sheet)
Coffee bush	<i>Breynia oblongifolia</i>
Tree broom-heath	<i>Monotoca elliptica</i>
Bootlace bush	<i>Wikstroemia indica</i>

**Friends of Tomaree National Park**

Protecting nature through community action





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*Polygala myrtifolia*

Shrubs

**NATIVE LOOK-A LIKES** DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

All the natives are clearly distinctive once flowering or fruiting. The vegetative form only, particularly in young plants, can be confusing. If in doubt, leave to grow a little. Leaf depictions here are mostly adult forms.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Coast teatree, <i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i></b> (also see species sheet)	
<b>Native:</b> Coast teatree	Young leaves (far right), like the adult leaves (right), are duller grey-green, slightly more pointed, oval-shaped with a small point (Adult: 5-8mm wide, 15-30mm long). Leaves obovate (broadest half is above the middle). Generally eucalypt smell when crushed.	
<b>Weed:</b> Polygala	Young leaves (depicted right either side of teatree) brighter green. Adult leaves more elliptical (6-15mm wide, 10-50mm long), rounded tips, relatively broad, thick and leathery, borne on very short stalks.	
<b>Warning</b>	Seedlings and young plants are easily confused Brightness / dullness can vary depending on whether in sun or shade. If in doubt, leave. 2 years before polygala flowers.	

**Coffee bush *Breynia oblongifolia***



Leaves alternating up the stems, in two rows either side of stems, appearing compound, in sets of 4-14 on short side branches, each 10-30mm long, 8-15 mm wide.

**Warning:**  
**weed look-a like**  
Breynia is readily confused with the weed Cassia, *Senna pendula*, a yellow flowering pea.

**Tree broom-heath *Monotoca elliptical***



Leaves erect to spreading, elliptic, oblong with point, usually 10-25mm long, 3-7mm wide, finely striate-veined

Flowers creamish  
Fruit orange or red, egg-shaped, 2.5-4 mm long