



PLANT OF THE MONTH: MAY

CRANBERRY HEATH (*Astroloma humifusum*)



(Photos: C. Schultz; *Astroloma* patch amongst other native plants at Lands End; close-up of shrub and flower)

Astroloma is a small prostrate shrub, up to 15 cm tall, that looks like a cushion. It's a prickly cushion though, because the tiny narrow leaves are quite hard and sharp. The leaves are green, but when stressed over summer, the plant often turns a burnished red. The shrub's berries are juicy and edible, but with a large stone.

Have a good look at the little red tubular flowers. Can you see how the tips of the flower tube spread outward in a star? Can you also see tufts of hair inside the tube? The word *Astroloma* is derived from the Greek words for 'star' and 'fringe' ('astron' and 'loma'). Around Cape Jervis, you'll find this pretty little shrub in sandstone, shale and clay, often in exposed spots.