



WEED OF THE MONTH: APRIL

Apple of Sodom (*Solanum linnaeanum*)



(Photos: G. Leiper © and J.R. Hosking ©)

What a cute purple flower! But those melon-like fruits that follow the flowers can be poisonous to children and animals, should they try to eat them. The plant grows as a spreading shrub to about 1 m high at Cape Jervis, with bright green leaves that have 3 or 4 deep rounded lobes. The leaves and stems are covered in prickles up to 15 mm long. The purple flowers grow in clusters, and only the bottom flowers of a cluster grow into the round fruits. Green when unripe, yellow when ripe, these fruits are juicy, but dry out then burst to shed the seeds. Not many animals eat the fruit, so the seeds are dispersed more by wind. The plant also spreads underground by rhizomes, so if you are removing this weed, take out the roots as well as the melons!