The Bridal Creeper

newsletter of the national asparagus weeds management committee

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national asparagus weeds management committee

A.asparagoides
A. africanus
A.densiflorus
A.declinatus
A.plumosus
A.scandens
A.virgatus

newsletter funded by :-

Natural Heritage Trust
Helping Communities Helping Australia

Government of South Australia
Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation

Western Cape form to be tackled this season

The excellent mapping exercise completed by Robin Coles and his team from Rural Solutions South Australia (RSSA) has culminated in an action plan to tackle the Western Cape form of bridal creeper in South Australia and Victoria.

In a meeting held in April, members of all relevant State agencies from both sides of the border met to discuss how to contain the weed and eradicate satellite infestations.

The discussion revolved around two distinct approaches to the weeds management; firstly the immediate response to the known infestations and secondly the management of the weed over the long term to reduce it to a point where total eradication may become feasible.

To achieve the initial objective of containing the weed each agency, which included Parks Victoria, Dept. of Primary Industries Victoria, ForestrySA, South East NRM Board and Dept. for the Environment and Heritage SA agreed to apply herbicide to all mapped infestations within their jurisdictions. In addition two community groups were encouraged to develop projects to assist in achieving total coverage. The groups involved are the Friends of Beachport and Canunda National Parks and the South East Coastal Management Group. Financial assistance has been requested from Envirofund. State activities have received funding in the last round of the Defeating the Weed Menace initiative

The longer term management is secured with the South East NRM Board and Glenelg Hopkins CMA listing the weed on their priority lists.

NAWMC wishes take this opportunity to thank everybody involved in this positive response to a new weed incursion.

Weed turns up in Adelaide

Sadly we have to report that an infestation of the Western Cape form has been found in a conservation park in the North Eastern suburbs of Adelaide. The full extent of the infestation is not known but the hunt is on to find out. The discovery was made by a Friends group who sent specimens to the South Australian Herbarium for identification. A big thanks you to everybody involved in finding the weed and for responding so quickly.

New chairperson for committee

The National Asparagus Weeds Management Committee congregated in Melbourne earlier in the month for the second face to face meeting.

Mae Adams, incoming Chair

The most important order of business was the voting in of Mae Adams as the committees new Chair, taking over from John Virtue.

Mae owns a beautiful bushland property in Venus Bay Victoria, and has first hand experience in tackling bridal creeper. Her working back ground is in the administration of the visual arts.

Mae brings a community perspective to the committee and we look forward to her contribution and wish her well in her role as Chair.

Other business discussed included the direction to be taken to continue the distribution of biological control agents now that the national funding for the CSIRO project has ceased. Work will continue in Victoria till 2007. This responsibility will now fall to community groups. The committee will continue to pursue all funding opportunities to support programs developed in this field.

Committee members from left to right Dean Overton, Sue Longmore, Greg Lefoe, Louise Morin, Greg Stewart, Mae Adams, Jamie Cooper, Paul Downey

Also discussed were the future research priorities for Asparagus weeds, the Tasmanian eradication project and its future and the fall out from the *Defeating the Weed Menace* funding round.

A solid outcome from the meeting was the development of a priority list of tasks to be achieved over the next twelve months. The list is available on the bridal creeper webpage at www.weeds.org.au

Also on the committee John Thorp (left) and John Virtue

Importance of having a plan

Developing a plan or strategy which clearly sets out targets and outcomes is the best tool anybody can have in the fight against invasive plants. Strategies outline what is to be done in a specific time frame, by whom and what the measurable outcome will be.

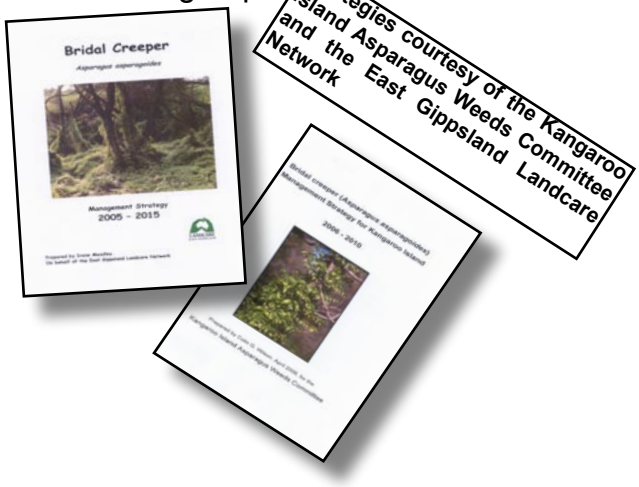
Developing the strategy is often time consuming and viewed negatively by many community groups. This is unfortunate because the benefits derived from having a strategy certainly make the effort worthwhile.

The gathering of the information in the course of developing the strategy allows groups the opportunity to get an understanding of the full extent of the weed issues faced and allows for the prioritisation of sites, workloads and the equitable distribution of available resources.

A well through out strategy is imperative when approaching regional, State and Federal bodies for funding. An application for financial assistance that is underwritten by a comprehensive strategy will be viewed in a more favourable light.

Two regional plans developed by the Kangaroo Island and East Gippsland bridal creeper and Asparagus weeds working groups have been placed on the bridal creeper webpage at www.weeds.org.au. Please feel free to view or download any of these. The objective is not that these be directly copied but rather that they provide an excellent example of well developed strategies.

The National Bridal Creeper and Asparagus Weeds Management Coordinator would be happy to discuss the development of a strategy with interested groups.



Strategies courtesy of the Kangaroo Island Asparagus Weeds Committee and the East Gippsland Landcare Network

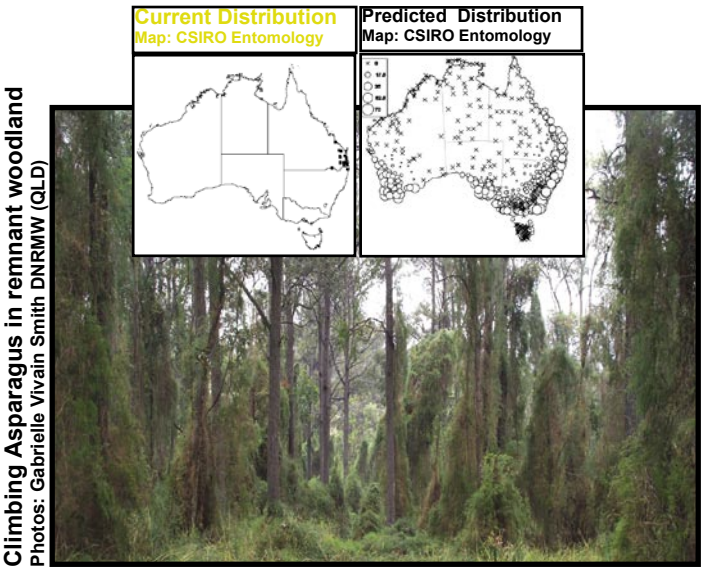
Spotlight on *Asparagus africanus*

Climbing asparagus *A. africanus* is a perennial climber reaching up to 8m into trees, and can often completely cover smaller trees, understorey shrubs and ground layer plants. Roots are fibrous and form dense mats just below the soil surface. The stems of mature plants originate from a fleshy underground crown. Each stem measures 1-2cm in diameter and possesses numerous, persistent, curved spines, each up to 2cm long.

Growth crown of climbing asparagus
Photo : Gabrielle Vivain Smith DNRMW (QLD)

Climbing asparagus is most prominent in remnant semi-evergreen vine thicket/Brigalow forest communities, particularly in the Marburg-Boonah district of southern Queensland, and is also present in many moist gullies. The current mapped range is from Lismore in northern News South Wales to Rockhampton in central Queensland in a band extending up to 120km inland from the coast. Predictive mapping shows that this range could extend southward as far as Victoria and South Australia.

Control of the weed is difficult with physical removal of the crown, which is then left exposed on the ground, proving to be the most effective method for small scale infestations. Herbicide trials have been completed. A paper outlining the results has been published in the special ***Plant Protection Quarterly (Asparagus edition)***. See the article on the PPQ on this page.



Climbing Asparagus in remnant woodland
Photos: Gabrielle Vivain Smith DNRMW (QLD)

So this is why we bother

Having spent the past year or so looking at bridal creeper growing under roadside trees, along fence lines and in areas that in the main did not look to have a lot of biodiversity value, I was beginning to question our motives in frantically trying to kill this thing. Until I came across this orchid while out “working” in the bush. The orchid, standing about twenty centimetres high and exquisitely beautiful was growing under thick kangaroo thorn trees far from any appreciative human eyes in an intact stand of remnant bush. We were only there in a mad caper involving counting bridal creeper stems to determine what effect a past fire has had on its growing ability. The sight of this orchid with the bridal creeper bearing down on it brought home to me the essence of what we are trying to achieve. That is ensuring that a native plant, one of hundreds, can continue to grow and reproduce unhindered by weeds in the small remaining patches of remnant vegetation, feeding whatever lives off it where nobody will ever see it for generations to come.Makes sense to me.

Spot the orchid. Clue look for the yellow ring !
Photo: Peter Turner CSIRO

Plant Protection Quarterly

Special Asparagus Weeds Edition

Available Online Now !

All papers presented at the November 2005 Asparagus Weeds Management Workshop as well as other previously unpublished material on Asparagus weeds is now available on the bridal creeper webpage.

www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/bridalcreeper/

Research continues on bridal creeper

The success of the rust fungus and herbicides on reducing or killing off the above ground portion of bridal creeper has thrown up another challenge - what to do about the dead tuber mat left behind ?

Peter Turner of CSIRO is undertaking a PhD researching just this issue as well as what effect bridal creeper leaf litter is having on nutrient levels within the soil.

This research, combined with that done by Dr John Virtue of the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (SA), has uncovered just how resilient the tuber mats are. At a field trial site in South Australia intact tubers mats have been observed in the soil eight years after the infestation was treated with herbicide. While the tubers are dead and pose no threat of re-shooting, Peter is studying what impact their physical presence has in preventing native vegetation recruitment.

Peter Turner and John Virtue
Photo: Dennis Gannaway

Another question being addressed at this and other research sites in Western Australia is what effect the altered nutrient levels in soils have on native vegetation and if it is promoting the growth of other invasive weed species.

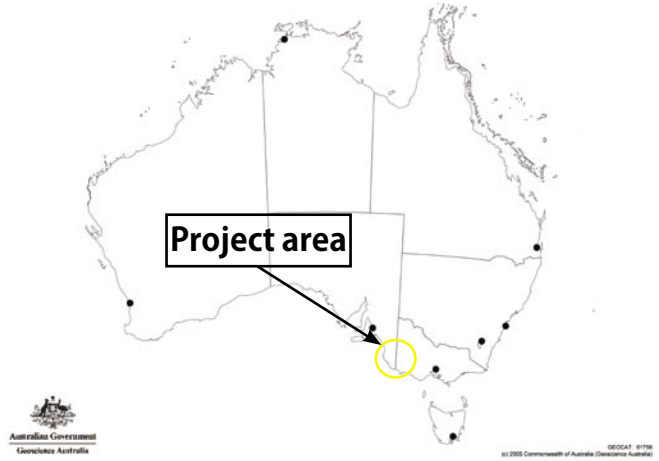
Peter reports that he is in the final stages of his research. We look forward to using his work in the future in order to rehabilitate areas once covered by bridal creeper.

Peter (Left) and Dennis Gannaway in Kangaroo thorn assessing the impact of bridal creeper. Photo : John Virtue DWLBC

Defeating the weed menace

Bridal creeper management will be advanced in three major regions with financial assistance from the Federal Governments **Defeating the Weed Menace** initiative. The projects, aimed at the spread of biological controls and strategic management of both forms of bridal creeper will take place in the Wimerra CMA (Vic) Glenelg Hopkins CMA (Vic) and the South East NRMB (SA). Agencies include the Parks services of both States, Forestry SA, DEH (SA), DSE (VIC) and community groups.

Congratulations to the successful proponents.



Parting shot

The following article appeared in the online issue of *The Independent Newspaper,* Adelaide recently. While the figures are very frightening in themselves, it still pales when compared to the $4.00b dollars spent annually on weed control. $4.00b is an estimate from the Weeds CRC for the cost to primary production in both direct management of and lost production from weeds. The figure for weed control in the natural environment has yet to be calculated.

Climate change to cost $1b each year

"Soaring temperatures and declining rainfalls caused by climate change could wipe a billion dollars a year off Australia's wheat industry within 30 years, a study suggests. Professor Peter Grace, from the Queensland University of Technology, today said a study of five major wheat-growing areas predicted changes to weather patterns could cause a drop in production of up to 24 per cent. He said atmospheric carbon dioxide levels were predicted to increase significantly in Australia over the next 30 to 50 years, causing temperatures to rise up to three degrees and rainfall to drop by around 20 per cent or more."

Independant Weekly Indaily (online) 07/06/06