

# The Bridal Creeper

newsletter of the national asparagus weed management steering committee

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### the fine print disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the National Asparagus Weeds Management Steering Committee nor those of any of the funding bodies associated with the Committee.

Advice offered in the newsletter is of a general nature and should not be exclusively used in any decision making process.

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**Welcome** to the first edition of *The Bridal Creeper*. This publication is the mouthpiece of the National Asparagus Weeds Management Steering Committee who has been charged with the task of prioritising, implementing and updating the National Management Strategy for Bridal Creeper. While the initial focus will be on bridal creeper, because of its declaration as a Weed of National Significance (WoNS), the efforts of the committee will encompass all Asparagus weeds posing a current or potential threat to Australia's environment.

The committee is made up of Federal and State Government representatives working in the field of pest plant management. The committee is currently seeking representatives from community land management groups to ensure input from this important volunteer work force who possess vast practical knowledge of weed control. Suggestions of candidates from the weed management community would be gratefully accepted. Please forward names to Dennis Gannaway, the National Bridal Creeper Management Coordinator.

## Current committee members

**Kathryn Batchelor**  
CSIRO Entomology  
Western Australia

**Jamie Cooper**  
Dept. Primary Industry, Water and Environment  
Tasmania

**Paul Downey**  
Department of Environment and Conservation  
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**Raelene Kwong**  
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**Louise Morin**  
CSIRO Entomology  
Canberra

**John Thorp** ( ex officio)  
National Weeds Management Facilitator

**John Virtue** ( Chair)  
Dept. Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation  
South Australia

**Gabrielle Vivian-Smith**  
Department of Natural Resource Management  
Queensland



**Fig 1. Curtain of bridal creeper**  
Photo: DWLBC

National Management Strategy for Bridal Creeper available from  
<http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/bridalcreeper/>

## emerging threat ?

A new form of bridal creeper has been identified growing across the coastal border of Victoria and South Australia. This form was discovered by Kathryn Batchelor and Peter Turner (CSIRO Entomology) in the Port McDonnell region of South Australia and later by Sarah Holland-Clift (DPI), Dave Bone and Dave Ryan (Parks Victoria) across the border in the vicinity of the town of Nelson, Victoria. Teams were busy with routine releases of bridal creeper biocontrol agents at the time.

Samples sent to Dr Louise Morin of CSIRO Canberra, identified the plant as the south-western Cape form of bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*), as previously described by Edwards and Kleinjan (1999). In Australia this form will be referred to by the common name of **Western Cape Bridal Creeper**.

Of major concern is this form's apparent resistance to the rust fungus *Puccinia myrsiphylli*. Field observations noted that there was considerably less rust damage on the new form when compared to the more common variety. If this is true, and research by CSIRO is being conducted over this growing season to verify this, then there is a real threat of this new form potentially reinfesting areas cleared of the common bridal creeper.

An application for funding for a mapping and containment exercise, to be conducted in September 2005, has been submitted to the



**Common form      Western Cape form**

**Fig. 2 Comparison of tubers. Larger tubers on the western cape form arranged vertically**

Photo: Peter Turner (UWA & CSIRO)

Natural Heritage Trust. The exercise, which has received overwhelming support from South Australia and Victoria State agencies, will result in the creation of a distribution map and the development of an action plan for an eradication program.



**Western Cape form**

**Fig 4: Tubers in the hand, better than in the bush !!**

Photo: Megan McCarthy

Adapted from original unpublished article written by Sarah Holland-Clift (DPI Victoria)

Edwards, P.B. and Kleinjan, C (1999) A reappraisal of the identification and distribution of *Asparagus asparagoides* in Southern Africa. *South African Journal of Botany* 65, 23 - 31



**Common form      Western Cape form**

**Fig 3: Comparison of "leaves". Western cape's leaf larger and waxy with a flat waxy stem**

Photo: Sarah Holland-Clift

## a date for your diary

**Asparagus Weed Management Workshop**  
**10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> November 2005**  
**Adelaide**

This two day forum will bring together scientists and land managers targeting asparagus weeds. Recent advances in biocontrol, herbicides, ecology, impacts, taxonomy, detection and regional management will be discussed. Workshop sessions will enable interactions between delegates to determine future research directions and define best practice management.

## working with rust spores

The rust fungus *Puccinia myrsiphyllii* has become the weapon of choice against bridal creeper. It is most satisfying to see the dramatic death of bridal creeper shoots where the rust has taken hold.

Distribution of the rust is relatively easy and many groups have found innovative and cost effective ways to redistribute fungus from nursery sites.

The rust fungus and spores are known to be non-toxic and do not produce any substances that are toxic. However, care must still be taken during the handling and transportation of rust infected bridal creeper. Whenever infected foliage is cut or handled during the redistribution process, millions of spores are released into the immediate environment around those working. Without taking preventative measures, the spores are capable of being inhaled or coming into contact with worker's eyes. This has the potential to cause irritation and aggravate any pre-existing respiratory conditions.

As we all know from working with weeds; prevention is by far the best policy. The recommendation is that all workers handling bridal creeper foliage infected

with rust wear facemasks, gloves and eye protection. When transporting foliage in motor vehicles, it must be placed in sealed plastic bags. Only work in well-ventilated areas.

The last word on the matter is to wish you a productive and **safe** rust redistribution season



Fig 5: Gloves, Goggles and face mask  
Photo: DWLBC

## national bridal creeper management coordinator

Dennis Gannaway has been appointed to the position of National Bridal Creeper Management Coordinator. The position, funded through the NHT, is for a contracted period of twelve months.

The objective of the position is to ensure that best practice information is shared between the various groups involved in bridal creeper and Asparagus weed control. In addition,

the position is responsible for the implementation of strategic actions as directed by the National Asparagus Weed Management Steering Committee. The editing and distribution of this newsletter is also part of his function, so if you wish to make a contribution or just comment on what you have read so far, please drop him a line at the contact details listed on page one. He also welcomes comments on any aspect of the implementation of the national management strategy



Fig 6: Dennis at his desk  
Photo: DWLBC

## new funding opportunities

The Threatened Species Network in conjunction with the World Wildlife Fund Australia have called for funding applications from community organisations for projects involving the protection of remnant bush through activities such as threat abatement and weeding. Full details including eligibility criteria and application forms available from:

[www.wwf.org.au](http://www.wwf.org.au)

**April 12 Community Conservation Grants Now Available.** (click on this heading in the news section)

or

**Tel 1800 032 551 and speak to Mary Watt**

**Applications close Friday 03 June 2005**

For more information on weeds in Australia : [www.weeds.crc.org.au](http://www.weeds.crc.org.au) & [www.weeds.org.au](http://www.weeds.org.au)

# national distribution of biological control agents

Three biological control agents of bridal creeper have now been released in Australia: the leafhopper *Zygina sp.* in 1999, the rust fungus *Puccinia myrsiphylli* in 2000 and the leaf beetle *Crioceris sp.* in 2002.

A national redistribution program established in 2002, with the financial assistance from the Natural Heritage Trust, has fast tracked the release and spread of the leafhopper and rust fungus across the entire range of bridal creeper infestations. Nursery sites of the leaf beetle are being established and monitored in order to support future redistribution efforts. Over the years, CSIRO and DPI Victoria have been teaching community groups and landholders the basic skills to identify, release and monitoring the impact of the agents.

Detailed information about the agents and various protocols for release and redistribution are accessible at the website listed below. A national database of release sites, which is linked to a web-based interactive map is also available and used to keep track of the releases made. The interactive map is also available at the website listed below. Follow the prompts from the home page.

If you are involved in the redistribution of any of the control agents, we encourage you to inform the CSIRO and DPI Victoria so that the most up-to-date information can be posted on the website. This will ensure that work efforts are not duplicated and that resources can be channelled into areas of most need.

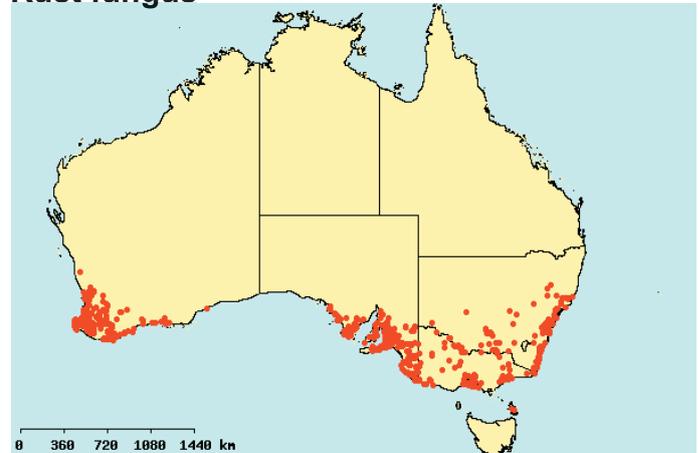
artical adapted from CSIRO Entomology website.



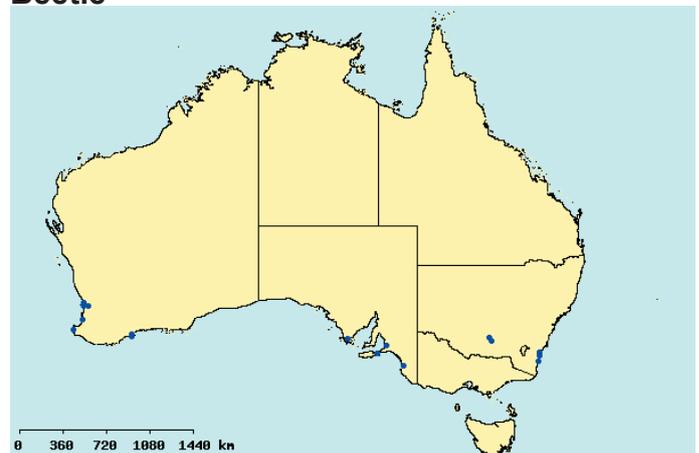
Fig 7: Leafhopper, rust fungus and beetle eggs  
Photos: Louise Morin CSIRO & University of Adelaide

## Maps of biocontrol release sites April 2005

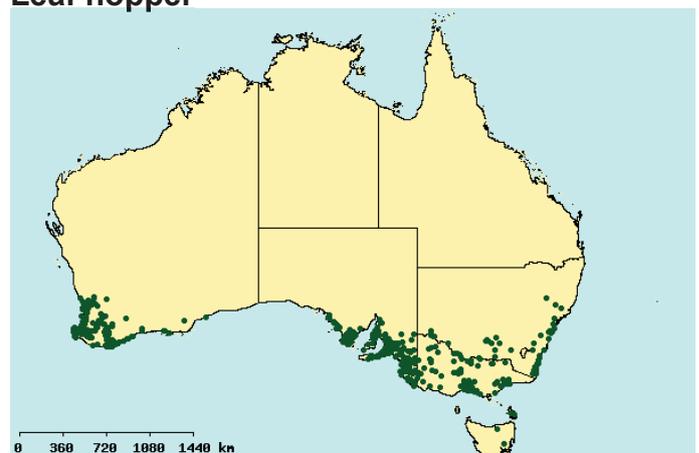
### Rust fungus



### Beetle



### Leaf hopper



Maps: <http://mapserver.ento.csiro.au/bridalkb/bridalkb.phtml>

Map sizes are not restricted to a national scale. Regional maps can be developed, down to the scale of individual release sites. Check out your area and don't forget to update your region's information on the website. It's really easy to do!

Visit CSIRO Entomology at : <http://www.ento.csiro.au/weeds/bridalcreeper/project.html>