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DEFEATING  
THE WEED MENACE



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

the fine print disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the **National Asparagus Weeds Management 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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## NAWMC sets direction for the future

The National Asparagus Weeds Management Committee (NAWMC) met in the town of Toronto on Lake Macquarie NSW to discuss the future of bridal creeper and the other Asparagus weeds as Weeds of National Significance (WoNS).

With the distribution of the rust fungus and leafhoppers as biological control agents on bridal creeper it was necessary to evaluate what was still to be achieved within the national management strategy before the more formal Australian Weed Committee review in 2008.

After a long day of debate the following areas were identified as requiring more attention.

- Research into post control restoration of infestations - What are we going to do with the tuber mats ?
- Encourage the development of Asparagus weeds working

groups in South East Queensland and in the NSW / Victoria Murray Valley region.

- Develop extension material for the wholesalers and retailers of garden plants explaining the dangers of Asparagus weeds.
- Hold workshops in Western Australia to encourage control of Asparagus weeds at a community level.
- Expand the State declarations to include all weedy Asparagus species.
- Endeavour to obtain a Nation-wide off label permit for herbicide control of bridal creeper.

Having spoken of the problems the committee had the opportunity to observe Asparagus infestations within wetlands adjacent to Lake Macquarie and ground asparagus *A. aethiopicus* growing in remnant patches of scrub in sand dunes south of Gosford.



**Fig 1 & 2 : NAWMC members talking with Kim Hignell Vegetation Control Officer and John Hughson Landcare Coordinator for the City of Lake Macquarie at a salty wetland infested with Asparagus weeds**



# The Asparagus weeds threat in New South Wales



**Fig x. Ground or Basket Asparagus *A aethiopicus* growing in a salty wetland in Lake Macquarie.**

**Photo : Dennis Gannaway NAWMC**



**Fig x. Bridal creeper and Asparagus fern *A. plumosus* growing in the same patch in a conservation area adjacent to Lake Macquarie**

**Photo : Dennis Gannaway NAWMC**

Over the past two years I have been in the fortunate position to have traveled extensively within southern Australia. On my earlier visits to NSW in 2005 the most repeated comment I received was “bridal creeper is not major problem here”. Recently however the comments have changed to reflect a concern at the rate of spread and the amount of bridal creeper being found in the State. What I cannot confirm is whether there is indeed an increase in the range of the plant or rather an increased awareness of the weed. Biological control agents have been released in NSW and have established particularly in the coastal regions. More work is required to ensure that this spread continues. A project has been developed by CSIRO under the recent Defeating the Weed Menace funding call to train communities on release techniques. I am willing to assist local community groups set and run workshops in their regions.

Bridal creeper is however not the most prevalent Asparagus weed in the State. That dubious title belongs to *A. aethiopicus*, the ground or basket asparagus. This weed invades remnant patches of vegetation along the entire NSW coast. It forms a dense ground cover, out-competing native herbs and shrubs. Because of its habit of growing in close proximity to desired plants, herbicide control without off-target damage is difficult. The plant defends itself with an array of thorns on the stem making hand pulling painful and restricting movement of people and native fauna.

As mentioned in the previous story, NAWMC visited a number of Asparagus infestation sites in Lake Macquarie and south of Gosford. Here we observed stands of bridal creeper *A. asparagoides*, climbing asparagus fern *A. plumosus*, ground asparagus *A. aethiopicus* and garden asparagus *A. officinalis*. Of concern was that all four were found within a single site.

Asparagus weeds, with the exception of ground asparagus, do not occur at a high incidence in NSW. Now is the time to tackle them !

**Dennis Gannaway  
National Asparagus Weeds Management Coordinator**



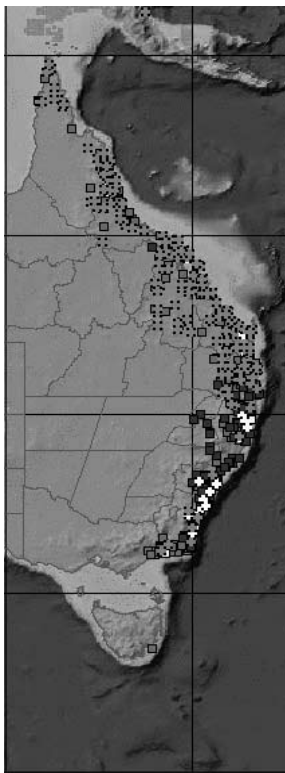
## Native could be confused with bridal creeper

The wiry native vine, wombat berry *Eustrephus latifolius* is similar in appearance to bridal creeper. The leaves of the wombat berry are longer, narrower and more spread out on the stems and do not have the characteristic glossiness of bridal creeper. Wombat berry fruits are yellow to orange while bridal creeper berries start green and ripen to red. Both plants produce tubers underground however the wombat berry tubers grow along roots radiating away from the rhizome while the bridal creeper tubers form a dense mat around the rhizome. The Wombat berry has perennial branched shoots while bridal creeper dies back in summer.

If you not sure which of the plants you are dealing with, contact the weed control officer at your local council prior to undertaking any control work.

Wombat Berry Distribution  
Map : AVH

### Wombat Berry

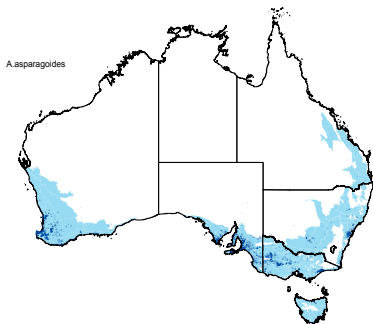


### Bridal Creeper



More information on the difference between the two plants can be found at the web page - <http://www.esc.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Sheets/vines/V%20Bridal%20creeper.htm> and in a publication entitled **Native Plant or Weed pick the difference** written by Ann Loughran available from the Tocal College book shop (02) 4939 8888

## Help needed to map Asparagus weeds



The NAWMC is undertaking an exercise to develop national distribution maps for all weedy Asparagus species. To ensure that the maps are as accurate as possible we are asking all groups who have point data for *A. africanus*, *A. virgatus*, *A. officinalis*, *A. scandens*, *A. aethiopicus*, *A. declinatus* and *A. asparagoides* to share it with us. Please forward data to Justin Williams at [williams.justin@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:williams.justin@saugov.sa.gov.au) It is envisaged that the maps will be available at National, State and NRM region scales per species. These will be freely available on the bridal creeper web page later in the year.

## Eradication in the West

Western Australia has taken a strong stance against four *Asparagus* weeds, placing them on the eradication and control target list under the States "Save our Species" initiative managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation.

The weeds targeted are -

- bridal veil *A. declinatus* being targeted in the Kings Park, hills outside Perth, Bunbury and outside of Albany.
- ground asparagus *A. aethiopicus* in Kings Park, Augusta and along the Albany highway.
- climbing asparagus fern *A. plumosus* in Fremantle, Bunbury and Esperance
- asparagus fern *A. scandens* in Margaret River and Denmark.

At a recent meeting with government staff, involved in the management of *Asparagus* weeds, a number of successes were reported. These include the eradication of *A. plumosus* in Fremantle, *A. aethiopicus* in Augusta and *A. scandens* in Denmark.

Congratulations to all involved and good hunting for the future.

## 2007 Envirofund call

The call for funding applications for the 2007 Envirofund has been made. Projects with a community focus and a value not exceeding \$50 000 will be considered.

Management efforts to control bridal creeper and other *Asparagus* weeds have received considerable support in past from this fund. Full details from the website at

<http://www.nht.gov.au/envirofund/index.html>

Closing date 27 April 07

The National *Asparagus* Weeds Management Coordinator is willing to help develop Envirofund projects relating to *Asparagus* weeds. Contact details on the front page.

## Manual's a hit with weedies



The ***Asparagus Weeds Best Practice Management Manual*** launched at the 15th Australian Weeds Conference in September last year has proved to be a hit with the weedy community. To date 1100 copies have been distributed across the country.

The manual was developed to assist land managers create an effective weed management plan, identify *Asparagus* weeds and give advice on the best management practice to be used in their control.

The manual has reached a wide audience including State and regional weed control officers, independent weed control contractors, community land care groups and interested individuals. Copies have even gone to the United States of America and New Zealand.

An electronic version is available from the bridal creeper website at :-

<http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/bridalcreeper/>

Copies are available from the **National Bridal Creeper Management Coordinator**.  
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