

Athel Pine – a real risk for Queensland

Sandy Leighton
WoNS National Athel Pine Coordinator
Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts
PO Box 1120, Alice Springs NT 0871, Australia



Athel Pine *Tamarix aphylla* - facts

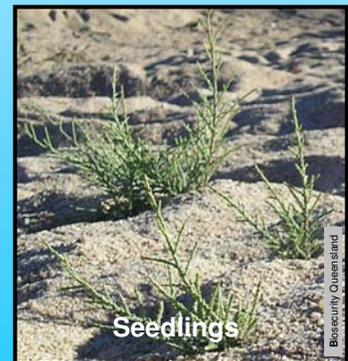
- A Weed of National Significance
- Declared in all States and Territories throughout Australia
- A **sleeper weed** eg Finke River NT
- Affects pastoral industry, conservation and tourism values
- Consumes large amounts of water, twice that of willows
- Alters the course of rivers, increases sedimentation rates
- Drought and salinity tolerant, fire resistant
- Concentrates salt, increases local salinity levels
- Reproduces by seed (up to 600,000/ mature plant)
- Also reproduces vegetatively
- Can live 50 -100 years
- Extremely deep rooted
- Destroys infrastructure (eg causes rusting to pumps, bores, gutters, metal buildings)
- Falling limbs are hazardous to humans and stock



Flowers



Leaves



Seedlings



King's Gully, Mt Isa



Finke River, NT



Flinders River, Hughenden

Sleeper Weed

Athel Pine is classified as a 'sleeper weed' because it was present in Australia for some time before it became weedy. A native to North Africa and Asia, it was first promoted as a useful tree throughout semi-arid and arid Australia and introduced in the 1930s. Widespread plantings followed up until the 1950s as wind and sun shelter species at homesteads, communities, bores, stockyards and for erosion control. Later, it was used for mine rehabilitation and salinity management in some states.

It was not until the 1970s and 1980s however, that the true weed potential of this plant was recognised, by which time it had developed along 600 km of the Finke River in NT. This rapid and sudden expansion corresponded with several large floods which are thought to have provided the perfect environment for seed germination and establishment. Athel Pine has since begun to naturalise in other areas of Australia, particularly where original plantings were adjacent to waterbodies ...

We need your help ...

- Be on the lookout for plants naturalising along watercourses, ephemeral lakes and around mines
- GPS and Lodge specimens with the Queensland Herbarium (www.epa.qld.gov.au/herbarium)
- Report sightings to sandy.leighton@nt.gov.au