

What are environmental weeds?

Environmental weeds are plants that have been introduced to our area from other parts of the world, including other areas of Australia, and are spreading and displacing native species. They have been introduced as ornamental garden plants, for fruit production or other agricultural use and have escaped from gardens and farms and are invading creeklines, forests, woodlands and coastal areas.

Many of these plants are fast growing, hardy and highly adaptable. They have highly successful reproductive mechanisms, including abundant seed production, seeds that remain viable for many years, fruit and seeds that are very attractive to birds and mammals, and/or other successful dispersal mechanisms. Many also have the ability to spread by vegetative means, such as rhizomes, bulbs and corms. They often have few predators or diseases to keep them under control in their new habitat.

Weeds are spread by seeds attached to shoes, clothing or vehicles, dumping of garden waste, and the movement of seed by wind, water and animals.



Stop the spread – what can you do?

Prevention: don't give weeds the chance

- Look out for the species listed in this brochure. It is much easier to treat weeds when present in small numbers than when they are well established. Early detection and control is the key. **Please contact the Cape to Cape Catchments Group to advise us of locations of the emerging weeds listed in this brochure and to seek advice about control methods.**

- Take a good look at your property. Check your existing plants and remove any that readily spread as they are potential environmental weeds.
- Where possible, choose local native plants. Local native plants occur naturally in your local area. Sometimes plants from eastern Australia are labelled as 'native' but are not native to WA and may be invasive (such as weedy wattles).
- If using non-native species choose non-invasive plants for your garden and landscape. Choose safe alternatives, including sterile forms of species that would otherwise set seed. Your local garden retailer may be able to advise you about these. Use the internet to find out about potential weediness of garden plants.
- Consider weediness when swapping plants or propagating plants for others.
- Dispose of garden waste responsibly. Never dump it over the back fence, on roadsides or in bushland. Dumping plants is one of the key 'escape' routes. Cover your trailer when transporting garden waste to the tip to avoid weeds and cuttings falling off and invading roadside bushland.
- Monitor your property to ensure that plants are not spreading and posing a threat to nearby bushland, creeklines or pastures.

Management of emerging and established weeds

- Undertake control of invasive environmental weeds. Weed control should be targeted to protect areas of high biodiversity value and to prevent the on-going spread of priority environmental weeds in the Capes region. Seek advice from the Cape to Cape Catchments Group regarding management approaches and control techniques.
- As a high priority, focus your weed control to protect areas of good quality native vegetation.
- Control weeds early before they spread and become well established.

Why do environmental weeds matter?

Much of our landscape is cleared. The native vegetation that remains provides valuable food, shelter and breeding habitat for native plants and animals. It also contributes to a healthy environment by providing many ecosystem services such as controlling erosion, protecting water quality, removing carbon and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere. Environmental weeds negatively impact on areas of native vegetation by out competing native plants for space, water and nutrients, changing and simplifying the composition of vegetation communities and reducing their value as habitat for native animals. Many weeds also increase fuel loads and fire risk.



References and further information

Moore, J & Wheeler, J (2008) *Southern Weeds and their control*. Department of Agriculture and Food WA. HerbiGuide www.herbiguide.com.au - *Detailed information about 600 weed species and control methods*. Florabase www.florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/weeds/ - *Detailed information about weed species*. Brown, K & Brooks, K (2002) *Bushland Weeds A practical guide to their management*. Environmental Weeds Action Network. Available at www.environmentalweedsactionnetwork.org.au/images/pdf/bushlandweedsbook.pdf Cape to Cape Catchments Group (2009) *Woody Weeds of the Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin Region*. Weeds Australia www.weeds.org.au/ - *Includes information about all Weeds of National Significance including recommended control measures*. Department of Environment www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/index.html www.weedinfo.com.au - resources related to weeds, their management and the natural environment.

Acknowledgements

Photos courtesy of John Moore, www.herbiguide.com.au, Department of Agriculture and Food WA NSW Department of Primary Industries, M Baker and Tasmanian Herbarium.



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'Our Environment - Our Future'

EMERGING ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS IN THE CAPES REGION

The following species are currently limited in extent or distribution in the Capes region. They have the potential to significantly impact on remnant native vegetation in our area and are a high priority for urgent action. Identifying existing populations of these plants and undertaking control to minimise further spread is a priority. Please contact the Cape to Cape Catchments Group about locations of these species.



Madiera vine (*Anredera cordifolia*) is a climber with wide, fleshy, ovate leaves that are 2 to 15 cm long. Its flower spikes resemble a lamb's tail and are up to 30 cm long. The vine produces thousands of reproductive tubers both underground and aerially along the stems. Potato-like tubers fall to the ground as vines age and sprout. Madeira vine is native to South America and a garden escape in parts of WA. It grows rapidly, blanketing and smothering both shrubs and trees and causing irreversible damage to the invaded ecosystem. It has been declared a Weed of National Significance in Australia. *Photos: © NSW Department of Primary Industries*



Asparagus fern or climbing asparagus (*Asparagus scandens*) is a perennial twining vine. It has fine fern-like leaves, white flowers in late winter and spring, and green berries turning orange/red through spring and summer. Birds eat the berries and disperse the small seeds. It is an aggressive plant, producing underground tubers which form dense, impenetrable mats. It is shade tolerant preferring moist sites. It competes with native plants preventing seedling regeneration and strangling or smothering soft barked plants. Originally from South Africa it has the potential to become widespread in Australia and has been declared a Weed of National Significance. *Photos: © John Moore*



Montpellier (*Genista monspessulana*) and **flax-leaf broom** (*Genista linifolia*) are yellow-flowered shrubs 1-3 m tall. Montpellier broom leaves have three rounded leaflets. Flax-leaf broom leaves have three narrow, pointed leaflets. Montpellier broom flowers in winter/spring, sometimes late summer/autumn. Flax-leaf broom flowers mainly in spring. The pea-like seed pods are narrowly oblong and hairy. Brooms grow quickly, seed prolifically and can tolerate diverse environmental conditions. They establish rapidly after disturbance, such as fire or grazing, but can also invade relatively undisturbed bushland areas. They are listed as Weeds of National Significance.



Geraldton carnation weed (*Euphorbia terracina*) is a Mediterranean shrub-like herb to 1 m high. It consists of several green to reddish, slender leafy stems which branch at the top to produce 4 or 5 flower stems. Flowers are yellow/green cup like structures. It grows rapidly, forms dense thickets and seeds prolifically. Seeds are spread in limestone used in road and path construction as well as in water, and carried by animals and machinery. Geraldton carnation weed can invade areas of healthy bushland out competing native species for space, light and nutrients. **Warning: the plant exudes a toxic milky sap which can cause skin inflammation and damage to eyes.**



African feather grass (*Cenchrus macrourum*) is a highly invasive clump forming perennial grass. It grows up to 2 m tall, has blade like leaves up to 60 cm long and an erect or drooping 10 to 40 cm spike-like seed head. It has the ability to spread rapidly due to a vigorous rhizome system. It can form dense infestations that out compete all other plants. It was introduced from South Africa as a garden plant but has become a serious weed in New Zealand and is now a prohibited plant in NSW. Large infestations present a significant fire hazard, reduce biodiversity and block access to waterways. *RH Photo: © M. Baker and Tasmanian Herbarium*



European olive (*Olea europaea*) is a small to medium tree with grey, green leaves. It has small white flowers in spring followed by fleshy fruit ripening in autumn/winter. It is a hardy, drought tolerant, very long lived species that is planted throughout the Capes region. Seeds are dispersed by birds and mammals. It is a serious bushland weed in South Australia where it forms mixed age thickets that virtually preclude native plant recruitment. Every effort should be made to prevent this species becoming an environmental weed in the south west.

LH Photo: © C R.G. & F.J. Richardson, Australian National Botanic Gardens RH Photo: © Clive Slater ikondesign



SPREADING ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS IN THE CAPES REGION

The following species are widespread throughout the Capes region. Control to prevent the on-going spread of these species, particularly in areas of high conservation value, is a priority.



Sweet pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*) is a spreading small tree to 8 m. It has large green glossy oval leaves, strongly perfumed attractive creamy flowers in spring followed by bright orange fleshy fruits highly attractive to birds. It is native to south eastern Australia. It has escaped garden plantings and is invading creeklines, forest and woodland areas. It is a shade tolerant species which out competes local native species, forming exclusive thickets.



Sydney golden wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) is a small tree to 10 m high with simple 'leaves' (phyllodes) that are bright green or dark green in colour. The phyllodes are elongated to linear in shape with 2-4 prominent longitudinal veins. It has yellow, rod-like flowers in July to Sept. Sydney golden wattle is native to NSW and Vic. It has been widely planted and is spreading in roadsides, creeklines and undisturbed bushland. Seeds are long lived and germinate readily. It can form dense thickets and inhibits the regeneration of local native species.



Flinders Range wattle (*Acacia iteaphylla*) is a bushy, spreading, often weeping shrub to 5 m high with simple silvery blue-green 'leaves' (phyllodes). It has yellow globular flowers in autumn to spring. Flinders Range wattle is native to SA. It has been widely planted and is spreading in roadsides and undisturbed bushland. It has enormous potential to spread further. It has explosive germination after the death of the parent plant, fire or disturbance. Plants are short lived but seeds are long lived and germinate readily. It can form dense thickets and inhibits the regeneration of local native species.



Dolichos pea (*Dipogon lignosus*) is a perennial, robust climber with alternate leaves divided into 3 broadly triangular leaflets each 2-7 cm long. It flowers in spring and early summer and has many clusters of large pea flowers that are white or pink to purple and 8-15 mm long. The flat seed pod is 2-4.5 cm long and 7-9 mm wide. Seed is viable for many years, and germination can be stimulated by disturbance or fire. It has perennial, spreading, underground rhizomes. Originally from South Africa it is commonly grown in gardens and is now spreading into roadsides and bushland. It grows rampantly smothering shrubs and trees as well as native ground-cover plants.



Myrtle leaved milkwort or butterfly bush (*Polygala myrtifolia*) is a shrub to 2.5 m high with crowded light green elliptic leaves that are 1.5 cm long. It has pea like magenta and white flowers in clusters much of the year, followed by circular fruit capsules. Native to South Africa, it is a garden escape now invading bushland. It can form dense, mixed-aged thickets preventing most other species establishing. It is a serious weed throughout Australia.

