

Asparagus Fern (*Asparagus scandens*)



Asparagus scandens leaves flowers and fruit

Photo credit: Lee Jeffery

What is Asparagus Fern?

Asparagus Fern (*Asparagus scandens*), also known as Climbing Asparagus, is a perennial, twining vine and is a declared weed.

It is a close relative of Bridal Creeper (*A. asparagoides*) and Bridal Veil (*A. declinatus*) which are two other serious Asparagus weed species in southern Australia.

Asparagus Fern is declared as an environmental weed under the *Landscapes South Australia Act 2019* and is commonly found in the Mount Lofty Ranges and on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

It is still a common garden plant in southern Australia and has the potential to “jump the fence” and invade bushland.

Asparagus fern is at an early stage of invasion and is yet to reach its potential distribution.

It is vital to act now and stop the spread of Asparagus Fern



Asparagus scandens unripened fruit

Photo credit: Lee Jeffery

How can I identify Asparagus Fern?

Asparagus Fern:

- is a slender, climbing perennial with dark green scale-like leaves 5-15 mm long and 0.5-1.5 mm wide
- scrambles over the ground forming a tangled mass of vines and climbs up plants to 3 meters
- produces small (5-7 mm) white to pinkish flowers during August to October (see photo)
- produces green fruit (5-7 mm berries) shortly after flowering that turn orange/red when ripe (see photo)
- develops underground tuberous roots which form a thick, impenetrable mat (see photo on next page).



Asparagus scandens flowers

Photo credit: Lee Jeffery



Asparagus scandens tuberous root system



Asparagus scandens bushland invader

Photo credit: Lee Jeffery

Why is Asparagus Fern a problem?

Asparagus Fern is an aggressive plant producing tubers (bulb-like roots) which form dense, impenetrable mats.

It competes with native plants for nutrients, light and space.

In New Zealand, where Asparagus Fern is a serious problem, native seedling regeneration has been prevented and soft barked plants and seedlings strangled or smothered.

It is hoped with your help we can prevent these impacts being replicated in our bushland.

How is Asparagus Fern spread?

Birds eat the orange fruits and disperse the small seeds. So garden plantings of Asparagus Fern can easily spread into native bushland.

It can also spread from dumped garden waste.

Control methods

- The best time to control Asparagus Fern is between June and August.
- If there are only isolated plants and outliers, manual removal is best, making sure that all tubers are removed.
- For larger infestations herbicide application is required.
- The Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia offers advice on suitable herbicides and rates. A copy of the handbook is available at www.pir.sa.gov.au.
- Always read the label of any herbicide to ensure it is suitable for its intended purpose and can be used safely.

Declarations

The following sections of the *Landscape SA Act* apply to Asparagus Fern in the Hills and Fleurieu region (excluding detached fruit and specific cultivars):

186(1) Cannot bring the plant into South Australia

186(2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it

188(1) Cannot sell the plant

188(2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant

192(2) Landowner must control the plant on their land

Further information

Further information is available through Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

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Email: hf.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au



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