

Sleeper weeds on Kangaroo Island

Sleeper weeds are non-native plants that have naturalised but have not yet reached their potential to form large and widespread populations in Australia.

These plants may appear benign for many years then spread rapidly following certain natural events such as flood, fire, drought or climate change, or a change in land or water management, or on reaching a critical population level.

Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus* agg.



Height/form: Shrub 2–6 m
Flowers: 5 petals, white to pink, late spring summer
Leaves: 3–5 leaflets, dark green upper surface and paler underneath
Seeds: Aggregate of small drupelets, 1–3 cm in diameter, 1 seed per drupelet, maturing to black

Threat: Impenetrable thickets exclude other vegetation; accumulation of dead canes and leaves can be a fire hazard.



Bluebell creeper or sollya *Billardiera heterophylla*



Height/form: Evergreen twisting shrub or climber
Flowers: Small clusters of blue, pink or white flowers. Individual flowers bell shaped, 1 cm long and wide with 5 petals

Leaves: Shiny oval or lance shaped, 5–7 cm long

Fruit: Fleshy, oval shaped, green, ripening to blue–purple

Threat: Smothers (competition for sunlight) or strangles other plants with a dense mat.



Gorse *Ulex europaeus*



Height/form: Spiny shrub 2–4 m
Flowers: Yellow, pea-shaped growing singly from stem
Leaves: Grey–green spines and leaves coated in wax and ending in a sharp yellow point
Seeds: Hard green–brown seeds housed in brown–black, hairy pea-pods 10–20 mm long

Threat: Impenetrable thickets exclude other vegetation, acidify soil and can be a fire hazard.



Sweet pittosporum *Pittosporum undulatum*



Height/form: Dense spreading tree 5–20 m
Flowers: Small creamy white, fragrant flowers in clusters
Leaves: Mid–dark green, shiny with generally wavy margins

Fruit: Fleshy fruit 15 mm in diameter, green ripening to orange. Fruits split in winter to reveal many sticky seeds

Threat: Nutrient rich leaf litter and dense shading disadvantage native vegetation in the competition for sunlight.



How you can help

- Plant natives from your local area.
- Remove known sleeper weeds from your garden.
- Don't share or sell sleeper weeds.
- Think about the weedy potential of anything you plant in your garden and if you can to control seedlings and suckering.

Contact: Animal Plant Control Officer

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