

# Pest plant – Bridal Veil

*(Asparagus declinatus)*

Fact sheet February 2019

## What is it?

Bridal veil is a South African native that was introduced to Australia as an ornamental plant in the late 1800s. The first recorded naturalised occurrence in SA was recorded on Kangaroo Island in 1954. It is a perennial climber that can grow over and smother native vegetation.

## What does it look like?



### General appearance

Bridal veil produces wiry main stems that can grow up to several metres in length. Its characteristic feathery blue-green foliage appears after autumn rains and dries to a distinctive yellow-green colour in early summer, before dying off.

### Leaves

The cladodes (leaves) are soft and needle-like, 3-100 mm in length, and densely arranged in groups of 3 along short, finely-branched side shoots off the main stem.

### Flowers and fruit

Flowers are produced are greenish white, 5-8 mm in diameter, and appear in July-August.

Bridal veil has green ovoid berries that turn pale translucent white as they mature and, at around 1 cm in length, are significantly bigger than the berries of the closely related bridal creeper. The berries appear in late winter-spring and contain an average of 5-8 black seeds per fruit.

### Underground tubers

Bridal veil develops a dense, underground, tuberous root mat that generally occupies the top 15 cm of the

soil, and accounts for 85% of the total mass of the plant.



## Why is it a problem?

Bridal veil smothers understorey plants and effectively out competes and displaces native species.

Germination and recruitment of native plants is suppressed due to the dense foliage cover and underground root mat. Like bridal creeper, it has the potential to become a severe threat to biodiversity. .

Bridal veil has been recognised as one of 32 Weeds of National Significance.

## Distribution

A serious infestation of bridal veil, around 500 km<sup>2</sup> in area, occurs on the eastern end of Kangaroo Island, in the Haines-MacGillivray area. It occurs along roadsides and in native vegetation on private properties. The KI NRM Board has obtained funding to control outliers at Baudin Beach, Grace James Corner and on the North Coast Road.



## How is it spread?

Bridal veil is spread mainly by birds eating the fruit, with its large berry size resulting in a variety of bird dispersers, including larger birds like ravens and currawongs, which can result in seed dispersal over a distances up of several kilometres. Smaller birds like silvereyes and honeyeaters will consume far less fruit, with resulting seed dispersal distance of less than 100m. The berries can also be eaten and seed dispersed by possums, rats and mice. Dispersal can also occur as a result of water flow down creeks, ditches and drains and through graders etc. digging up tubers and depositing them in new sites.

## How do we control it?

### Report bridal veil occurrences

We would request that you report any bridal veil occurrences outside the core infestation area and the outlier at Baudin Beach, so that NRM Board staff can respond and remove small infestations before they become too difficult to control.

### Physical removal

Physical removal of bridal veil involves careful excavation around and under the tuberous root mat and then levering it out with hand tools. This method is only effective if all of the root mass, including rhizomes (underground stems) are dug up and removed.

This method is only useful for small, isolated infestations, and should be carried out during winter while soils are still moist and before the fruit forms.

### Control with herbicide

While applying herbicide such as glyphosate will effectively kill off the foliage of bridal veil, experience on Kangaroo Island and elsewhere indicates that it does not kill the root mass. As a result, plants treated with herbicide 'resurrect' several years after treatment.

For advice on chemical control techniques, contact the Natural Resources Centre in Kingscote or download the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* at:

[http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds\\_and\\_pest\\_animals/weeds\\_in\\_sa](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds_and_pest_animals/weeds_in_sa).

## Declarations

The following sections of the NRM Act apply to African boxthorn on Kangaroo Island:

175(2) Cannot transport the plant, or any material or equipment containing that plant, on a public road

177(1) Cannot sell the plant

177(2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant

182(2) Landowner must control the plant on their land

185(1) NRM authority may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners

## For more information

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[www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/kangarooisland/](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/kangarooisland/)

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