# Have you seen this plant in your garden?

*Asparagus scandens* (Asparagus Fern)

A threat to biodiversity values in the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula



**Photo credit:** Lazaregagnidze, WikiCommons

Close up of Asparagus Fern fronds. **Photo: M**arkFagen

# 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 has only recently been declared as an environmental weed under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* 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 Fern in flower. **Photo:** Adelaide Hills Council
Asparagus Fern berries. **Photo:** S Molteno, WikiCommons

# 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)

## Have you seen this plant?

Contact us and contribute to the conservation of biodiversity in the region!

Asparagus Fern infestation in the Adelaide Hills. **Photo:** Adelaide Hills Council

Inset: Wattlebirds (pictured) and Silvereyes are likely dispersers of Asparagus Fern. **Photo:** Patrick K59, WikiCommons

# 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** of *A. scandens* 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.

# Best 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.

Landholders should always read the label of any herbicide to ensure it is suitable for its intended purpose and can be used safely.

Alternatively contact Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges for advice.



Asparagus Fern has tuberous roots which form a thick, impenetrable mat.

## Please help stop the spread of this declared weed

Contact us and let us know if you have Asparagus Fern in your garden or have seen this plant anywhere else.

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## More information

For further information on the management and control of Asparagus Fern please contact your nearest Natural Resources Centre.

**Eastwood**
205 Greenhill Road, Eastwood 5063
**T** 08 8273 9100

**Gawler**
8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South 5118
**T** 08 8523 7700

**Willunga**
5 Aldinga Road, Willunga 5172
**T** 08 8550 3400

**Black Hill**
115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone 5076
**T** 08 8336 0901

For more information on weeds visit
www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidemtloftyranges
www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity

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**Government of South Australia**

**Natural Resources**
Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges

The information in this brochure is based on a publication by Susan Lawrie