

# Bulbil Watsonia (*Watsonia meriana* var. *Bulbillifera*)

November 2015



Image credit: Kate Blood

Dense infestation of Bulbil Watsonia

Bulbil Watsonia is a winter-growing bulb. It is widely established in roadsides, degraded native vegetation and wasteland in the Mount Lofty Ranges.

Bulbil Watsonia is a declared weed under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act).

## Description

Bulbil Watsonia is an erect herb that produces dense stands of light green, sword-shaped leaves. The leaves are generally less than 1 m long and 5 cm wide. They are produced from a central corm in winter and die off in late summer and autumn, or earlier in dry years.

Flowering stems appear in spring and are slender, reddish and usually less than 2 m tall. Flowers form in spring and early summer and are orange to red, tubular and 5 to 8 cm long. Flowers rarely produce fruit in Australia.

Reproduction is clonal. Cormils are small, shiny red-brown reproductive buds that develop in clusters at the base of the leaves. The cormils are scattered when the leaves die and each one can form a new plant. The corms from which existing plants grow also divide and can create two to three new plants each year.

## Impacts

Bulbil Watsonia is an aggressive weed of native vegetation. In native woodlands and along watercourses bulbil watsonia can form continuous clonal stands that exclude other ground-layer species.

The plant also invades roadsides, wasteland and unimproved pasture in high rainfall and waterlogged areas.

Bulbil Watsonia only encroaches into pastures that have been ungrazed for extended periods. It is suspected of being poisonous, but stock avoid mature plants and are apparently unaffected by young shoots.

Corms and cormils generally survive fire and prolific flowering and cormil set can follow summer fire.

## Distribution

Bulbil Watsonia is a native of South Africa and was introduced to Australia as an ornamental garden plant.

It is widespread in the Mount Lofty Ranges, particularly in the higher rainfall areas.

It grows well on light or heavy, mildly acid to mildly alkaline soils and tolerates moderate waterlogging in winter.



Government of  
South Australia



Natural Resources  
Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges



Image credit: Kate Blood

Watsonia flower heads



Image credit: Kate Blood

Watsonia often invades roadsides and railway lines

### Control methods

Contaminated soil and plant material should be disposed of safely to avoid creating new infestations.

Small infestations in native vegetation can be controlled by spot spraying or wiping foliage with herbicide, although this is labour intensive. The use of selective herbicide on regrowth after fire is effective and reduces impacts to native plant species.

For advice on chemical control techniques contact your nearest Natural Resources Centre. Please refer to the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* for advice on chemical control. You can find it on Biosecurity SA's website at [www.pir.sa.gov.au](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au)

### Declarations

The following sections of the NRM Act apply to Bulbil Watsonia in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region:

- 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**

### More information

Please contact your local Natural Resources Centre for further information, advice and assistance in controlling Bulbil Watsonia.

#### Black Hill

115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone 5076

T: 08 8336 0901

#### Gawler

8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South 5118

T: 08 8523 7700

#### Willunga

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