

Apple of Sodom (*Solanum linnaeanum*)



Apple of Sodom is a perennial spiny shrub growing to about one metre tall. In South Australia it is mainly a weed of coastal districts where it slowly invades unimproved perennial pastures. It is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.

Description

Apple of Sodom has deeply lobed elliptic leaves, dark green with star-shaped hairs. The flowers are blue with five petals, and its prickles extend to 15 mm long. The berries are large and green, turning yellow then brown when ripe. Apple of Sodom is known to establish in disturbed natural ecosystems such as coastal vegetation, grassland/grassy woodland and vegetation on rocky outcrops.

Plants do not flower or fruit until the second year and flowering and fruiting extends from late spring to the end of summer. A large plant can produce approximately 1,500 seeds per year.

Impacts

The fruit of apple of Sodom is poisonous to humans and livestock due to the presence of glycoalkaloids, however the berries are not known to be palatable to stock. The leaves are not grazed by stock due to their prickly nature. This allows infestations to develop freely and can result in dense patches that have the potential to crowd out other plants, restrict stock and human movement and provide harbour for rabbits.

In coastal areas apple of Sodom can invade open or degraded native vegetation and is known to harbour large numbers of snails.

Distribution

Apple of Sodom grows well on sandy calcareous soils of coastal regions. It is not frost tolerant and is absent from areas prone to frost. Long distance dispersal can occur when berries are caught up in hay or machinery. Minor spread also occurs with the movement of contaminated agricultural produce, screenings, soil and through birds and foxes. Unlike some other solanum species, apple of Sodom does not sucker from the roots or spread by root fragments.



Control methods

Apple of Sodom can be manually removed, with plants and any fallen berries burnt. The chemical option to control the weed is herbicide Triclopyr.

What to do

If you suspect that you have Apple of Sodom, please email photos to Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu for identification. This is a free service and they will also provide you with information on current control techniques.

Declarations

The following sections of the *Landscape SA Act* apply to Apple of Sodom in the Hills and Fleurieu region:

- 186(1) Prohibiting entry to area
- 186(2) Prohibiting movement on public roads
- 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
- 194 Recovery of control costs on adjoining road reserves

Further information

Further information is available through Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

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