



Dune onion weed (*Trachyandra divaricata*) is highly suited to colonising coastal areas where it can become dominant and replace native species.

Dune onion weed (*Trachyandra divaricata*), also known as strap weed or branched onion weed, is an introduced weed that has become an aggressive invader of both intact and disturbed native vegetation.

Description

Dune onion weed is a tufted perennial herb growing up to 90cm in height with flat strap-like leaves that are a shiny bright green. The leaves are hairless, around 35-60cm in length and are usually prostrate.

It produces flowering stems of up to 70cm in length that are repeatedly and widely branched forming a tangled mass that detaches at maturity.

The flowers have 6 white or pale lilac petals 4-14mm long that have a purplish or brownish central stripe and often have a pair of yellow spots near the base. Flowering normally occurs from winter to late spring.

The plant produces around 200 fleshy capsules per flower that contains on average 12 red-brown to black pyramidal shaped seeds.

Reproduction and Dispersal

Individual plants usually live around 3-6 years and produce seed each year. Each plant is capable of producing up to 50,000 seeds each year. The tangled stems containing the seed capsules break off when the seed has matured and are blown like a tumbleweed across the landscape depositing seeds as they go. Plants may also regenerate from root fragments when plants are disturbed.

Broken off stems have the ability to float and seeds immersed in sea water for up to eight months may still germinate. These characteristics enable the

plant to spread long distances along the coast leading to possible widespread isolated infestations.

Impacts

Dune onion weed is highly invasive in coastal environments particularly in dune systems. It can rapidly replace native plants leading to a decline in biodiversity and has the potential to form a monoculture plant community. It is also known to be toxic to animals when eaten.

Distribution

Originally from South Africa, dune onion weed was first reported on the Adelaide coastline in the 1990's at Taperoo. It appears to have acclimatised well to conditions in South Australia and has since been found at Port Noarlunga, Tennyson, Brighton, Henley South and Grange.

Detection and Management

Dune onion weed is currently only limited in its distribution, so it is important to detect any new infestations early before they become fully established. Early control of these newer infestations will have a much better chance of successful eradication.

Potential sites for dune onion weed include coastal dune systems, foreshore areas, estuaries and may also include inland sites with sandy soils.

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For effective control, the entire plant, including its root system, should be dug out before it has a chance to set seed. Plants left in contact with moist soil may take root again so digging out plants is best done when the soil is dry, unless the plants will be bagged and removed from the site.

Herbicides applied either by wiping directly on to the plants or spraying onto the plants may also be an effective form of control. However, care should be taken to avoid herbicide contact with desirable plant species and any spraying of herbicides in native vegetation should be left to a qualified bushcare operator.

Further information on control can be obtained from your local Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board office.

Status

Although not a declared plant under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004, dune onion weed poses a significant risk to coastal plant communities and has been classified as a 'Red Alert Species' in a number of coastal management plans. The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board is actively supporting efforts to manage and control dune onion weed in the Board area.

A number of coastal Councils have put in place control programs to reduce and, hopefully, eradicate dune onion weed infestations from within their areas. The public can help these programs succeed by reporting any new infestations discovered to local Council or directly to the Board.



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