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NRM Plan

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CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

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Polygala (*Polygala myrtifolia* var. *myrtifolia*)

Reducing its impact in the Northern and Yorke NRM Region

Description of this weed

Polygala (sometimes called Myrtle-leaf Milkwort) is a woody shrub that can grow to about 4 metres tall.

The purple pea flowers are its most recognisable feature. These are produced throughout most of the year but mainly from August through summer. The flowers appear in clusters at the tips of branches and are about 1.5 to 4cm long. Following flowering, two-celled flattened capsules develop that ripen from green to papery brown. These are oblong and about 5mm long.

The leaves are green and oval shaped, about 5 - 20mm long and the tip can be rounded or blunt. Young stems are purplish with short curly hairs, but older stems are smooth and woody.



Why is it a weed and what is the impact?

This escaped garden plant can often be seen as large swards, especially in coastal areas, where it chokes out indigenous vegetation. Not only does Polygala invade coastal vegetation, but other environments as well, such as grassland, grassy woodland, mallee shrubland and riparian environments. In these environments it can form thickets that shade out native plants species, preventing the natural regeneration of the overstorey and shrub layer.

It reproduces by seed which is spread by water, birds, ants, dumped garden waste, and even equipment used at the beach, such as surfboards and towels can help spread seed. The seeds are long lived and can even germinate in heavy shade. Germination usually takes place in autumn but it can happen at any time providing sufficient moisture is available.





What can you do? – Some methods of control

Remove small and scattered plants first, then work from the least towards the most infested areas.

Mechanical

Seedlings should be hand pulled and larger plants can be cut at the base from which they rarely regrow, this should preferably be done before flowering and seed set.

Polygala is killed by fire; however disturbance and fire will also stimulate dormant seeds to germinate, so control may take many years.

Chemical

Mature plants can be sprayed with a non-selective herbicide.

Please contact your local NRM Authorised Officer for advice on chemical control.

Help and Assistance NRM Authorised Officers

Snowtown – 8865 2166

Riverton – 8847 2544

Minlaton – 8853 2795

Port Augusta – 8641 1513

Peterborough – 8651 3577

Orroroo – 8658 1086

