

# Spiny rush (*Juncus acutus*)

February 2015



Unlike native rushes the stiff spiny stems of Spiny rush will pierce skin

Credit: Dana Miles

Spiny rush is native to Europe, Africa and North America. It is declared under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act) and must not be moved or sold within the whole of South Australia. Within the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges region, landholders must control Spiny rush on their properties.

## Description

Spiny rush a shortly rhizomatous, tussocky perennial rush to 1.6 m high. The fruit is an ovoid 3-celled brown capsule with seeds 1.2–2 mm long and brown in colour.

## Impacts

This large tough weed, which grows to 1.6 meters high, will displace pasture species, and if left unchecked can form into impenetrable thickets. Spiny rush is fond of damp areas and will quickly invade watercourses.

## Distinguishing features

The plant's sharp spiny leaves and flower stems look similar, giving the whole plant a characteristic globe shape. The sharp spines, that project at many angles, make it especially dangerous for children. Unlike native rushes the stiff spiny stems will pierce skin. Care should be taken to not to confuse this weed with smaller softer native rushes. If in doubt seek advice on identification.



Spiny rush seed head

Credit: Dana Miles

## Flowers/seed head

It flowers throughout the year but mostly in spring and summer. Spiny rush has flowering stems (culms) 2–4 mm wide. Inflorescence are 4–13 cm long, consisting of clusters of 1–6 flowers; 1 or 2 leaf-like bracts 4–25 cm long at base of inflorescence. It has 6 stamens.



## Dispersal

Spread by seed. Much of the spread appears to be by seed contaminated mud attached to vehicles and animals. Spread into damp places and watercourses of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges area.

## Control

### Aim

To prevent the spread of Spiny rush. Eradicate small infestations, contain and reduce larger infestations. Destroy root system, establish desirable species.

### Methods

A combination of methods will give the best long-term results. Hand-grub smaller infestation or plough up larger infestations in cropping areas. Spray with herbicides only when actively growing. Thoroughly wet all foliage. Grubbing may encourage growth from the remaining root system unless fully removed

### Chemical

When using herbicides for controlling Spiny rush the best results are achieved when plants are actively growing (spring to autumn as a guide depending on the seasonal conditions).

Removing dead foliage and applying the herbicide to the fresher green growth will also increase effectiveness.

Seek advice and further details from your local natural resources centre about herbicide choices and application methods.

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/biosecuritysa](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa)

### Declarations

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

- 175** (1) **Cannot bring the plant into a control area**
  - (2) **Cannot transport the plant or anything with the plant in it**
- 177** (1) **Cannot sell the plant**
  - (2) **Cannot sell any produce/goods carrying the plant**
- 180** (1) **Owner must identify NRM authority of plants present on their land**
  - (2) **NRM authority must notify Chief Officer**
  - (3) **Chief Officer must notify NRM authority**
- 182** (2) **Land owner must control the plant on their land**
- 185** **NRM authority may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining land owners**



Young plants of the Spiny rush

Credit: Dana Miles

## More information

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

### Gawler

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

### Black Hill

115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone 5076  
T: 08 8336 0901

### Willunga

5 Aldinga Road, Willunga 5172  
T: 08 8550 3400