

# Bridal veil unveiled in the Mallee

With winter rains comes a flush of colour in the bush, with wattles flowering and orchids and lilies starting to emerge. But the rain also brings pest plants such as bridal veil (*Asparagus declinatus*), which germinates after rain and is a severe threat and aggressive invader to areas of native bushland.

With only a handful of known infestations in the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape region, keeping on top of existing and new sites is imperative to halting its spread.

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is urging local residents to report new sightings of this declared weed.

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Senior District Officer Steve Baltussen has been working with local landholders to control the weed around the Sherlock township and Coomandook along roadsides and private bushland.

"We have also been working with the Limestone Coast Landscape Board District Officers as the infestation goes across the boundary between the two regions in the Yumali area.

"Bridal veil was introduced from South Africa as a creeper garden plant and was popularly used in weddings for floral and table decorations," Mr Baltussen said.

"The weed has escaped gardens. It is now found in native vegetation, where it can smother and out-compete our native plants. Particularly the delicate and small plants that put on a show in spring, such as lilies and orchids.

"Bridal veil shoots emerge in autumn with the onset of cooler weather, and greenish-white flowers appear around August.

"It is important to look out for small, pale green berries beginning to form between August and September.

"Each berry contains an average of five-eight seeds and is spread by birds, possums and foxes. Birds can spread the seed as far as 20 km away from the original infestation," he said.

"The plants have an extensive root mass which creates a thick mat under the ground.

"It then grows to create dense groundcover that smothers native vegetation in a similar way to bridal creeper. Native seedlings struggle to emerge through this dense mat and gain access to moisture.

## MEDIA CONTACT

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"It's important to detect and manage small infestations early to prevent further spread and impact," Mr Baltussen said.

This weed can be sprayed with herbicide when found on roadsides, but it is difficult to control in bushland.

Mr Baltussen said off-target damage has to be avoided. It is recommended to dig out the weed in native bushland, which is labour intensive.

"The main method of removal is digging out the tuberous roots. All tubers must be bagged in strong black plastic and taken off-site to avoid reinfestation.

Mr Baltussen said we have had pleasing results so far and are hoping that we will get on top of the isolated outbreaks.

"However, follow-up will be needed for some years to come, in the infested areas.

"Ultimately, the aim is to eradicate this weed from the region," he said.

Bridal veil is amongst a group of *Asparagus* weeds that were declared Weeds of National Significance.

If you would like further information about bridal veil or would like to report an infestation, please contact the local Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board office at Murray Bridge phone: 8532 9100.

The Murraylands District Team is supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board through funding from the landscape levies.

*Photo caption 1: The community is being urged to report new sightings of the declared weed bridal veil (pictured) to their local Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board office.*

*Photo caption 2: Bridal veil starting to emerge among native vegetation following the onset of cooler weather and rain.*