

Factsheet: Bluebell creeper (Billardiera heterophylla)

Very High Risk Weed for Kangaroo Island

Bluebell creeper is an Alert weed for Kangaroo Island. Notify the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board. Early detection and control are the best way to prevent the next widespread weed.

It is a declared plant (https://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/234544/bluebell_creeper_policy.pdf) for South Australia.

THE SITUATION AND WHAT TO DO

Bluebell creeper (Billardiera heterophylla, formerly Sollya heterophylla) is a perennial climbing plant native to Western Australia that has become an environmental weed in several parts of southern Australia, including South Australia. It was widely introduced outside its natural range as an ornamental garden plant and subsequently escaped cultivation into nearby bushland.

In South Australia it occurs mainly in bushland, woodlands, forest margins and conservation areas, particularly around urban areas where it has spread from gardens. It forms dense climbing or shrubby growth that smothers surrounding vegetation.

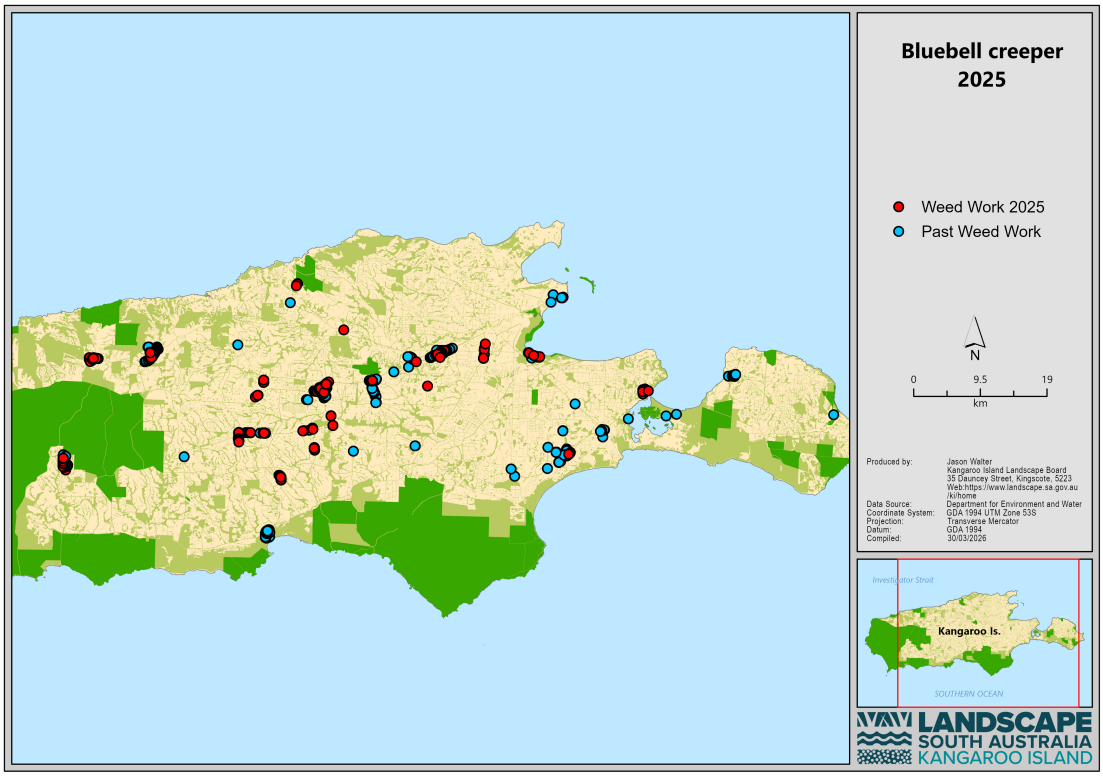
Bluebell creeper is a declared pest plant in South Australia under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=%2FC%2FA%2FLANDSCAPE%20SOUTH%20AUSTRALIA%20

The plant spreads primarily by seed contained in fleshy berries that are eaten and dispersed by birds and other animals. Seeds can also be spread through contaminated soil, garden waste, and

machinery, and may germinate after disturbance such as fire or soil movement. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for several years.

On Kangaroo Island infestations related to garden plantings have been found widely across much of the island with new infestations being found every year. A significant effort is going in to find and controlling this emerging weed and protecting sites. You can help by:

- Identify and remove young plants early before they produce fruit.
- Avoid dumping garden waste in bushland or reserves,
- Dispose of fruiting material in the general waste bin to prevent seed spread.
- Control mature trees and monitor sites for seedlings for several years after removal,
- Reporting any sightings to the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ki/contact-us).



DESCRIPTION

- **Growth form:** perennial evergreen climber or scrambling shrub with twining woody stems, typically growing 3–5 m high when supported, or forming dense shrubby growth in open areas.
- **Leaves:** glossy, hairless leaves 2–7 cm long, narrow-oval to lance-shaped, arranged alternately along the stems.
- **Flowers:** small bell-shaped flowers, usually blue but occasionally pink or white, borne in small hanging clusters. Flowering occurs mainly from spring to summer.
- **Fruit:** fleshy cylindrical berries up to about 2–3.5 cm long, turning from green to purple-blue as they mature in summer and autumn.
- **Seed:** each berry contains numerous seeds, often more than 50 per fruit and remain viable in the soil seedbank for around five years.

Similar looking native species include the sweet apple-berry (*Billardiera cymose ssp. cymose* (https://spapps.environment.sa.gov.au/seedsofsa/speciesinformation.html?rid=678) (https://spapps.environment.sa.gov.au/seedsofsa/speciesinformation.html?rid=678)), one-flower apple-berry (*B. uniflora*), and yellow-flower apple-berry (*B. versicolor*).

IMPACTS

Bluebell creeper is primarily an environmental weed that invades bushland, forests and conservation areas. Its vigorous climbing stems smother native shrubs and ground-layer vegetation, out-competing them for light and preventing regeneration of native plants. Dense infestations can alter the structure of native plant communities and reduce biodiversity. In heavily infested areas it may also hinder access and management of native vegetation.

CONTROL OPTIONS

Effective management usually requires a combination of methods. Small plants and seedlings can be hand-pulled or dug out, ensuring that the root system is removed to prevent regrowth. Larger plants can be cut near the base and the stump treated with herbicide, or foliage sprayed with suitable herbicides where off-target damage can be avoided.

Ongoing monitoring is important because disturbance often stimulates germination from the soil seedbank.

Good hygiene practices such as preventing the movement of contaminated soil or contaminated machinery. Do not place cuttings in your green waste bin — help limit further spread.

There are currently no widely used biological control agents for bluebell creeper.

For further advice on control techniques contact the Landscape Board office in Kingscote or download the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* (https://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/232382/weed-control-handbook.pdf)for advice on chemical control.

Permitted and on label herbicides and rates can be found on the PIRSA Weed Control Website (https://pir.sa.gov.au/crops-and-plants/weeds-and-plant-pests/declared-weeds/bluebell-creeper):

DECLARATIONS

Bluebell creeper is declared under the following sections of the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=%2FC%2FA%2FLANDSCAPE%20SOUTH%20AUSTRALIA%20
:

- **188(1) Prohibiting sale of the plant**
- **188(2) Prohibiting sale of contaminated goods**
- **192(2) Landowners to control the plant on their properties**
- **194 Recovery of control costs on adjoining road reserves**

FURTHER INFORMATION

- **Declared Plant Policy - pir.sa.gov.au** (https://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/234544/bluebell_creeper_policy.pdf)
- **Early Intervention Handbook - pir.sa.gov.au** (https://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/388369/early-intervention-for-new-and-

emerging-weeds-south-australian-handbook.pdf)

- **Weeds Australia -weeds.org.au** (https://weeds.org.au/profiles/blackberry-european/)
