

***Chrysanthemoides monilifera ssp rotundata***
BITOU BUSH

SEPTEMBER 2008

Bitou Bush was introduced to Australia in 1908 and is one of the worst coastal weeds in NSW. It has infested more than 60% of the NSW coastline and is a Weed of National Significance.

DESCRIPTION

Bitou Bush is a perennial sprawling shrub, which grows 1 to 2 metres high and reproduces from seed. Leaves are alternate, bright green and usually smooth-edged or only slightly toothed and pointed at the tip. They are practically hairless, although young leaves have a cottony down. Flowers are bright yellow and have 11 to 13 petals. The plant flowers intermittently all year round, but the main flowering is May to July. The plant produces berries, which are spherical and hang in clusters, and during ripening the green fleshy berries turn black. Bitou Bush produces up to 50,000 seeds per plant per year, which can be spread by birds, foxes, ants and rabbits.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Bitou Bush is an effective coloniser on sandy soils and quickly dominates the existing vegetation, forming almost pure stands in many areas to the detriment of native species (both flora and fauna). Dense stands impede traffic along paths and can alter natural fire regimes. Pest animals such as rabbits and foxes also shelter in large stands and compete with native animals for resources. Bitou Bush is the dominant weed of coastal vegetation in NSW and has been listed as a key threatening process to biodiversity under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995).

HABITAT

Bitou Bush has become an aggressive invader of native coastal ecosystems in Australia and is not restricted by climate. It prefers sandy or medium-textured soils and disturbed situations, particularly near the sea where it tolerates saline conditions. It has been recorded up to 10 km inland and will occasionally occupy disturbed edges and roadsides close to the coast.



Bitou Bush in flower.
Source: NSW Agriculture

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Bitou Bush is a native of southern coastal areas of South Africa. Bitou Bush appears to have been introduced to NSW in ships' ballast, which was dumped on the banks of the Hunter River about 1908. Later recognised as an effective coloniser on sandy soils, it was planted for this purpose between 1946 and 1968 along much of the NSW coast on areas that had been sand mined or otherwise disturbed. Not only did it colonise these areas but soon dominated the existing vegetation in adjacent areas.

DECLARATION

Bitou Bush has been gazetted as a noxious weed in 53 local government areas in NSW. The Noxious Weeds Act 1993 is an instrument serving the protection of our environment, general health of the community and agricultural production. Under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 all noxious weeds must be controlled. The act applies to all landowners and occupiers. This weed has a control category of class 4. For class 4 noxious weeds: *"The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled according to the measures specified in a management plan published by the local control authority"*, Failure to comply with the prescribed categories may result in a fine of 100 penalty units.

CONTROL

For small-scale infestations, dig out plant including root ball (small plants can be easily pulled by hand). Larger plants can be cut and painted with Glyphosate 360g/L. Spraying in winter at reduced rates is effective but council's advice should be sought before attempting control of large-scale infestations. Priority should be given to areas with sparse infestations or close to sensitive vegetation communities.



Bitou Bush (light green) infesting coastal vegetation.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
Bushcare or Greenweb Units
on 02 9710 0333
© Sutherland Shire Council.

Sutherland Shire
COUNCIL 