



### *Asparagus asparagoides* **BRIDAL CREEPER**

SEPTEMBER 2008

Bridal Creeper is an aggressive, invasive plant classified as a Weed of National Significance. Once popular for wedding bouquets it has escaped to become a serious threat to bushland.

#### **DESCRIPTION**

Bridal Creeper is a cool season perennial, dormant during hot, dry conditions. When actively growing, 87% of the plant is located below ground. The leaves grow on stalks 1-7 cm long and each leaf section is oval with a pointed tip, shiny with fine veins. Flowers are white with six petals that curl back and it hangs from small stalks. Blossom appears in winter to early spring. Fruit forms as a berry 10 mm diameter containing up to nine seeds. Initially green, it ripens to red and matures to black as the stem dies. Stems are round, 1-2 mm diameter, numerous and multi branched, shiny green, to 3 m long. Roots are tuberous attached to branching rhizomes which grow in clumps that can exceed 30 cm in diameter and grow to a depth of 10 cm.

#### **EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

Bridal Creeper forms an impenetrable network of twining stems and smothers growth from ground level to a height of 4 m. This growth will smother and exclude native vegetation and the water storage tubers will strongly compete for water with native plants. Below ground, clumps of rhizome and tuber mats establish to 10 cm deep. These break easily making removal and herbicide use very difficult. A treated site can require monitoring for up to six years.

#### **HABITAT**

Bridal Creeper thrives in light, well-drained soil in a shaded position. However, it will also grow in a diverse range of habitats, soils and climates. It invades dry and wet forest, mallee shrublands, creek and riverbanks, citrus orchards, roadsides and coastal vegetation. It tolerates part shade, drought conditions and most soils including saline. It is frequently located in rough, steep terrain and land that has been degraded.



Bridal Creeper grows thickly on other vegetation.  
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

## ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Bridal Creeper is a native of Southern Africa. Present throughout Australia, except the Northern Territory, it was first recorded in an Australian nursery catalogue in 1857 and had become a common garden plant by 1870.

## DECLARATION

Although classified as a Weed of National Significance, Bridal Creeper is currently an environmental weed in Sutherland Shire. It is important that environmental weeds are destroyed, as they can affect human health, or can be invasive in the natural environment killing the native flora and reducing the natural biodiversity. Native animals may also be affected due to the loss of their natural habitat.

## CONTROL

- **Seedlings and small infestations** can be dug out. Remove plants in autumn-winter when the soil is moist and before seeds form. Cut stems at the base, the foliage will dry in the canopy. Use hand tools and carefully excavate around and then under the rhizome-tuber mass before attempting to lever it out.
- **Large infestations** – it is suggested you contact council staff before attempting any clearance work or herbicide control. Biological controls are available for large infestations.



Bridal Creeper smothers a native Pittosporum.  
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact  
Bushcare or Greenweb Units  
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