Flax-leaf broom *(Genista linifolia)*



Flax-leaf broom is a shrub that was introduced as a garden ornamental and widely grown in the temperate regions of southern Australia. It is an aggressive invader that is predominantly found on hills sides where it forms dense thickets and is also known as Mediterranean broom and needle-leaf broom.

Flax-leaf broom is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019.*

Description

Flax-leaf broom is a shrub to 3m high, with a main stem and numerous brownish-green branches. Dark green leaves with a silvery, hairy underside and rolled edges, grow to 25mm long and attach alternate along the branch in groups of three.

Bright yellow, pea like flowers to 15mm long form clusters at the tips of branches, producing hairy, brownish black oval shaped pods containing 2-3 seeds.

Seeds can be ejected up to 3m from mature pods as they ripen throughout summer.

Impacts

The large number of seeds spread locally allows the quick formation of dense thickets, becoming the dominate shrub layer, shading and crowding out other smaller native shrubs and groundcovers.

Flax-leaf broom is a legume, fixing atmospheric nitrogen, which can increase soil fertility and encourage other weeds to invade the area.

Infestations of flax-leaf broom can harbour pest animals, reduce food sources for native animals and increase fire fuel-loads. Stock will eat young seedlings; however, the plant is considered toxic to stock if grazed excessively.

Distribution

Flax-leaf broom is native to the western Mediterranean region and was deliberately introduced in the 1800s as an ornamental and hedging plant. It prefers slightly acidic soils in warmer temperate regions with moderate rainfall.

Flax-leaf broom produces large amounts of seed that is hard coated and has long term soil survival. Mass germination events can occur following fire or soil disturbance.

In South Australia Flax-leaf broom has naturalised and is a common environmental weed with scattered populations in the Mt Lofty Ranges and Fleurieu Peninsula region. It is found predominately on hillsides and roadside, and poses a serious threat to a range of vegetation communities.

Control practices

Flax-leaf broom seedlings can be manually removed when small by hand pulling when the soil is moist. Larger thickets may need to be mechanically removed.

Removal of mature plants, particularly where the soil has been disturbed, can stimulate the mass germination of seeds in the seed bank. Seedlings can be spot sprayed with triclopyr plus picloram herbicides before their first flowering season.

Herbicide application can be effective on mature plants, but requires follow up control. Individual plants can be cut close to the ground and stump painted with triclopyr plus diesel, or the stem injected with herbicide. Herbicide treatment should be undertaken when plants are actively growing.

For advice on chemical control techniques, contact the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board.

You can also refer to the PIRSA Weed Control Handbook for further advice on chemical control at www.pir.sa.gov.au.

Declaration

The following sections of the Landscape SA Act apply to flax-leaf broom in the Hills and Fleurieu region.

- 186(2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it
- 188(1) Cannot sell the plant
- 188(2) Cannot sell any produce/goods carrying the plant
- 192(2) Landowner must control the plant on their land
- 194 Regional Landscape Board may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners



Further information

Further information is available through Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

Mount Barker Office:
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