

ASPARAGUS WEEDS

Asparagus weeds are threatening the health of our beautiful natural ecosystems in Pacific Palms, and frustrating gardeners with its spread. Can we stop it in its tracks by 2020? We think there's a chance! Read on to find out how.

**Bushland-friendly gardens
goal:**

**Reduce asparagus weeds by 80% in
Pacific Palms gardens by 2020.
Ensure everyone is active in pulling out
new asparagus seedlings.**



Photo: Asparagus infesting bushland in Forster

Asparagus in Pacific Palms

While there are many varieties of asparagus, the 'ground' and 'climbing' varieties (*Asparagus aethiopicus* and *A. plumosus*) are the ones invading bushland and gardens in Pacific Palms. They were introduced into Australia from Africa and Saudi Arabia as ornamental plants and are still found in older gardens.

Because of their huge environmental impact they were listed in 1999 as a key threat to biodiversity in NSW, and a Weed of National Significance.

A lot of work has been done to remove asparagus weeds from bushland around Pacific Palms, with some areas, such as the Wallis Lake foreshore, well on the way to recovering. Many landholders are also very active in removing the weed. Despite this, asparagus weeds remain the most common environmental weed found in Pacific Palms backyards - it's time to focus our energy and stopping its spread.

What am I required to do?

Let's work together to meet our 2020 goal! Act now to find and destroy asparagus weed from your garden. We will be reinspecting properties where asparagus has been found.

Under the Biosecurity Act (2015), you are required to control weeds on your property. Please contact us if you require any assistance to discuss your options.

We're here to help!

For more information about Pacific Palms Backyard Bushcare and our target weeds, visit:
midcoast.nsw.gov.au/backyardbushcare

To discuss any aspect of bitou bush control on your place, please contact Council's weed officers on 6591 7222.

NSW WeedWise asparagus information:
weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/12
weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/40

ASPARAGUS WEED DRIVE!

**Turn over for a handy guide to get you
started on removing asparagus from
your property...**

INVADER: Asparagus weeds



Why is it a problem?

Ground asparagus forms dense blankets of growth, crowding out native plants, and reducing available soil moisture and nutrients. The spikes are painful. Climbing asparagus invades bushland trees, smothering native vegetation.

What does it look like?

Ground asparagus has many arching, thin and spiny stems 1-2 m long arising from a central woody corm or crown sitting just below the surface of the soil. It has dense roots with multiple water and nutrient-storing tubers.

The "leaves", which occur in clusters of 1-5 on short side branches, are really cladodes (short, flattened stems that look and function like leaves). They are 1.5 to 2.5 cm long, 0.2 to 0.3 cm wide and taper to a fine short point.

The white-pink flowers, each about 5 mm in diameter, are spaced along a short stem. The fruit is a berry, 5-8 mm wide, green at first then maturing to a glossy red. Seeds have a high germination rate, but can last in soil for over two years.

Climbing asparagus has similar cladodes, crown and roots, but is a branching vine with wiry climbing stems to around five metres long. It has greenish-white bell-like flowers and black fleshy berries.

How does it spread?

Ground asparagus reproduces both by seed and vegetatively from its crown or corm. Fragments of the short, crown-forming rhizomes can generate new

plants, however the roots and tubers themselves cannot reproduce vegetatively, and act only as storage organs.

Spread occurs when birds and lizards feed on the fruit and disperse the seed; through the dumping of garden waste containing crowns, fruits and seeds; and less commonly these days through the sale of nursery stock to gardeners.

How to control it

- The best way to control asparagus is to locate the 'crown' - the growing point all the stems originate from - and cut it out using a knife or sharp trowel.
- The roots with their water storing tubers can be left in the soil as they won't reshoot.
- Throw the crown and any stems with berries in the red-top bin.
- If removing the crown is too difficult, remove any stems when the berries appear each winter - and repeat every year.

Tips:

- Always wear gloves, as the stems have spikes.
- Use the red-top bin to avoid contaminating Council's compost with asparagus weed!

