

Bitou bush

Chrysanthemoides monilifera subsp. *rotundata*

BITOU BUSH BIOSECURITY ZONE ESTABLISHED

Bitou bush is native to coastal regions of South Africa. The exact date and manner of introduction of Bitou bush into Australia are unknown. The introduction was probably accidental through dumping of ballast by ships arriving from South Africa.

Earliest herbarium records indicate an introduction to the Stockton area near Newcastle, NSW, in about 1908. From 1946-1968 Bitou bush was planted deliberately along the NSW coast by the Soil Conservation Service of NSW to aid in erosion control and post-mining rehabilitation.



Distribution

Bitou bush has invaded coastal habitats in south-eastern Queensland, NSW and Lord Howe Island. It is particularly prevalent on the central and north coasts of NSW.

Description

Bitou bush is a spreading, woody shrub with succulent stems. It often lies prostrate on the ground. Typically 1-2m tall and 2-6m wide, it develops a creeping habit under shade and may smother canopies up to 10m in height.

The leaves are bright green, succulent and oval in shape with a tapering base and irregular teeth along the edge, growing 3-8cm long. Young growth is typically covered by a cottony down.

Mature plants produce lots of bright yellow daisy-like flowers with 11-13 'petals'.

The fruit is green, becoming black when ripe, and each contains only a single seed. The seeds are egg-shaped, 5-7mm long, fleshy externally with an internal hard bone-like shell that is dark brown to black when dry.

Habitat

Bitou bush grows in a range of environments from open exposed dunes to shaded forests. It is tolerant of shade, salinity, strong wind, wind-blown sand, salt and water, drought, low nutrients and, to some extent, of disturbances such as fire. Grows poorly in wet or swampy soils and has a low tolerance to frost.

Reproduction and dispersal

Dispersal occurs primarily by animals, such as birds and foxes eating seeds and passing them in faeces. This can spread seed over distances of kilometres. Some seeds may also be dispersed by ocean currents or through coastal creeks and waterways.



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(Photo source: Rous County Council.)

Declaration: Biosecurity Zone

The Bitou Bush Biosecurity Zone is established for all land within the State (NSW) except land within 10km of the mean high water mark of the Pacific Ocean between Cape Byron in the north and Point Perpendicular in the south.

Within the Biosecurity Zone, this weed must be eradicated where practicable, or as much of the weed destroyed as practicable, and any remaining weed suppressed. The local control authority must be notified of any new infestations of this weed within the Biosecurity Zone.

Regional priority weed objective outside the Biosecurity Zone: Containment

These weeds are widely distributed in some parts of the State. While broadscale elimination is not practicable, minimisation of the biosecurity risk posed by these weeds is reasonably practicable.

Control

If you have seen, or think you have seen, Bitou bush please contact Rous County Council on (02) 6623 3800 for a positive identification and advice on control.

Chemical control

Herbicides registered for Bitou bush can be applied in winter at low rates that effectively kill the weed, yet have minimal impacts on coastal vegetation.

Glyphosate and metsulfuron methyl have been the herbicides most widely and successfully used against Bitou bush. Talk to your produce store for advice on chemical options.

Non-chemical control

Bitou bush has a relatively shallow root system with no taproot. Seedlings and young plants can be removed by hand, and ideally before they first flower and set seed.

Larger plants should be rocked back and forth gently until they come away cleanly, ideally when they are not in fruit to limit the spread of seeds.

For further information contact:

Rous County Council
02 6623 3800

www.rous.nsw.gov.au

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