

DISTRIBUTION OF BRIDAL CREEPER (*MYRSIPHYLLUM ASPARAGOIDES*)
IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Summary. Bridal creeper (*Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*) is widespread in the south-west of Western Australia. The weed has a disjunct distribution, isolated but severe infestations occur throughout the area, particularly associated with old settlements and town sites. It is likely that bridal creeper in the south-west of Western Australia has yet to reach the full extent of its distribution and impact on native vegetation.

INTRODUCTION

Bridal Creeper, *Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*, is a significant environmental weed in south-western Australia (9). Bridal creeper is of southern African origin and has been grown extensively as a garden plant. The weed is spreading rapidly through bushland of high conservation value on roadsides, farmland and public reserves. In this poster we report on surveys of the distribution of bridal creeper in Western Australia as part of the preparation for the introduction of biological control agents (17) and for the eventual proclamation of bridal creeper as a noxious weed in south-west Western Australia.

METHODS

Surveys were started in 1990 to establish the extent of infestation. Data were compiled from records of roadside populations (first author), records held by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, including records of the Western Australian Herbarium, and from infestation reports of the Agriculture Protection Board (second author).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The plant is widespread and was found at over 90 localities during the roadside survey, spread throughout the middle and lower south west of Western Australia. Plants were found south west of Regans Ford (30°59'S 115°42'E) in the north, Lake Grace (33°06'S 118°28'E) inland and Hopetoun (33°57'S 120°07'E) in the east (Fig. 1).

The Department of Conservation and Land Management Herbarium records show that the eastern extremity of bridal creeper occurrences in Western Australia are Israelite Bay (33°38'S 123°52'E) and Toolinna Cove (32°44'S 125°01'E) on the coast of the Nullarbor Plain (Fig. 1). These locations are in the Nuytsland Nature Reserve. Plants have also been observed at Dongara (29°15'S 114°56'E) (Keighery pers. comm.) which is 210 km north of plants found at Regans Ford. Bridal creeper has been recorded in other nature conservation reserves in the south-west of Western Australia (10), particularly the wheatbelt (Table 1). Bridal creeper has been recorded in 9 of the 43 National Parks in the south-west of Western Australia (Table 2).

Weed morphology and distribution

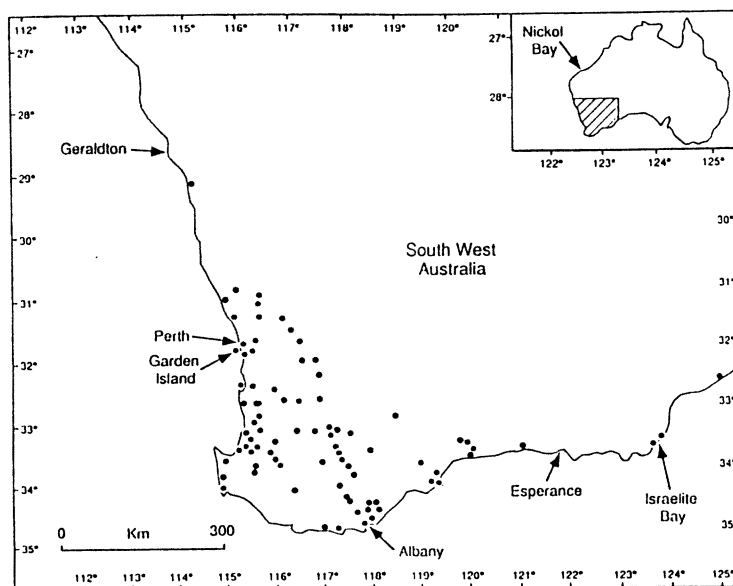


Figure 1. Distribution of *Myrsiphyllum asparagoides* in Western Australia.

Table 1. Known infestations of bridal creeper on CALM nature reserves in south-west Western Australia.

Nature Reserves	Shire	Source
4569/1711	Broomehill	6
9219	Kent	6
10914	Tambellup	6
10930 & 25711	Dumbleyung	6
24599 & 32204	Katanning	6
29860	Lake Grace	6
29182, 6798 & 9718	Pingelly	3
25705	Albany	3
8478	Bridgetown/Greenbushes	3
A29977	Northam	3
Town reserves	Manjimup	3

Weed morphology and distribution

Table 2. Known infestations of bridal creeper in National Parks in Western Australia.

National Park	Shire	Source
Yanchep	Wanneroo	1
Neerabup	Wanneroo	10
Yalgorup	Waroona	10
Tuart Forest	Capel	10
Leeuwin/ Naturaliste	Busselton & Augusta - Margaret River	10
Stirling Range	Cranbrook	10
Fitzgerald River	Jerramungup - Ravensthorpe	2, 4
Stokes	Esperance	10
Cape Arid	Esperance	2, 10

Additional published records of bridal creeper are known from banksia and tuart woodlands near Perth (8, 11) and the Warren Botanical subdistrict (7). The weed is well established in the Perth metropolitan area at locations including Woodman Point (14), Bold Park (12), Star Swamp, Trigg Dunes and Forrestdale Lake (Pigott, unpublished data), and Kings Park (17).

An 1886 record of bridal creeper from Nichol Bay in the Pilbara (16) (Fig. 1) appears to be anomalous as there has been no further records from the region. The earliest confirmed record is 1956 for plants found on Garden Island off the coast near Perth (15).

Bridal creeper has also been recorded by the Agriculture Protection Board as occurring in 33 south-west shires including drier parts of the southern wheatbelt. Reports from this source are known to be incomplete because of the informal nature of the reporting request (ie. bridal creeper is not a declared plant and does not have to be reported). From our other records bridal creeper is known from an additional 9 shires not including local government areas of metropolitan Perth. In total, bridal creeper is found in more than one third of south-west shires and notably all coastal shires between Perth and Esperance.

Bridal creeper populations are often centred on old settlements and town sites indicating that humans are a major source of initial spread. Invasion into remnant vegetation is mostly attributed to escapes from gardens and garden refuse, and also to seed dispersal by birds and flowing water (13). However, while Western Australian Herbarium records indicate that bridal creeper has long been established at some sites (eg. old Telegraph Station at Israelite Bay), the weed has not spread from these locations. In contrast, populations at other locations (eg. Woodman Point) have spread extensively through undisturbed remnant vegetation in recent times (Keighery, pers. comm.).

Control options being considered for bridal creeper include herbicide treatments (eg. 13), and the introduction of biological control agents (17). The weed is being considered for proclamation as a noxious weed or as a shire pest plant in south-west Western Australia.

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