

Invasive plants and animals



Basket or ground asparagus fern

Asparagus aethiopicus cv. *Sprengeri*

DECLARED CLASS 3



The problem

Basket asparagus is one of the most significant garden escapes invading the coastline. It survives well on sand dunes, shallow-soiled headlands and in rainforest understorey. In some places it has become the dominant ground cover displacing native plants, even in undisturbed systems. A problem along the entire coast, it is also known as ground asparagus or simply asparagus fern. It was introduced from Africa.

Description

Basket asparagus has long, arching, prickly stems up to 2 m long. The slender leaves are light green. It produces clusters of small, creamy flowers and fruits up to 8 mm in diameter. Fruits ripen to bright red and each contains a single, black, round seed. Tubers bearing starch and water are present, but these do not regrow or reproduce.

Management strategies

This plant need not be a problem if it is kept in a pot or hanging basket in a location that can not be accessed by birds. Birds eating the berries disperse this plant. Unwanted plants should be dug out and disposed of at the appropriate Council landfill site. Take care to remove the entire crown or underground stem of the plant, to reduce the chance of regrowth.

Declaration details

Basket or ground asparagus fern is a declared Class 3 plant under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. The Act prohibits the supply or sale of Class 3 plants and may require their removal from environmentally significant areas.

Further information

Further information is available from the vegetation management/weed control/environmental staff at your local government.

TABLE 1 – HERBICIDES REGISTERED FOR THE CONTROL OF BASKET OR GROUND ASPARAGUS FERN

Method	Herbicide	Rate	Registration status	Comments
Spot spray	metsulfuron-methyl (600 g/L)	10 g per 100 L water plus wetting agent or 100 g/ha plus wetting agent	PERMIT 7485	Do not use on coastal dunes or near the root zone of casuarinas or pandanus trees.
Cut stump, spot spray	Diesel	Apply neat	PERMIT 7485	Trials suggest spraying the entire central crown to the point of runoff. This does not require cutting or disturbing the target plant or other surrounding vegetation.
Sport spray	dicamba (500 g/L)	200 mL on mature to 1 L on regrowth per 100 L water, or 2 L/ha	PERMIT 7485	Only for short-term knockdown.

Read the label carefully before use and always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.

It is a requirement of a permit that all persons using the products covered by this off-label permit comply with the details and conditions listed in the permit. In addition, read the herbicide label carefully before use and always use the herbicide in accordance with label directions. The above permit can be used by pest control operations, members of environmental groups such as Bushcare, Catchment Care, Coast Care and people employed as or working under supervision of local and state government officers.