

Environmental Weeds at Dennes Point

What is an environmental weed?

An environmental weed is a plant that is not native to the local area (exotic) and can successfully 'invade' and establish in native vegetation. Many of the plants that meet this definition are suburban garden plants that have 'escaped' into nearby bushland.

Why does it matter?

Many plants recognised as environmental weeds are valued by gardeners for a range of reasons, including the fact that they are attractive, provide tasty fruit or attract birds. As a result, it is common to hear people ask '*why does it matter – what harm are they doing?*'

Environmental weeds have the potential to displace native plants, to disrupt natural interactions between plants and animals and to alter landscape processes, particularly if they become a major part of the vegetation they invade. Some of the known impacts from particular environment weeds include:

- taking over huge areas of natural coast and bushland (eg broom and gorse);
- replacing important habitat for native animals (eg blackberries and sea spurge);
- changing the way the coast works (eg marram grass and sea wheat-grass);
- changing the shape and ecology of waterways (eg willows); and
- out-competing native plants (eg Spanish heath, gorse and boneseed).

Sometimes the negative impacts on the environment are obvious (eg areas being 'overrun' with a weed species') and sometimes they are not, but ecological interactions are complex and just because we can't see harm doesn't mean that no harm is being done.

To provide a simple example of harm that might occur as a result of an environmental weed and that might not be immediately apparent, imagine an escaped garden plant which produces abundant fruit and successfully invades local bushland. Now imagine a bird species (native or introduced) whose breeding season coincides with fruiting of the environmental weed. This scenario could easily result in significantly increased breeding success and a 'population explosion' of one bird species, which could occur at the expense of other native birds which are in competition for food or habitat (eg nesting hollows).

The best way to minimise the risk of harm to the environment is to minimise the establishment and spread of exotic plant species into native vegetation.

Environmental weeds at Dennes Pt

There are a wide range of environmental weeds at Dennes Pt, including Boneseed, Broom, Cotoneaster, Mirror Bush, African Boxthorn and Radiata Pine. For a comprehensive list of species to be concerned about contact Siobhan for an electronic copy of the [Weeds of Southern Tasmania](#) (PDF) or [Coastal Weeds of Tasmania](#) (PDF) booklets. See also [DPIPWE's Invasive Species resources web page](#) or [Weeds Index](#) (web page).

Where are they?

Environmental weeds at Dennes Pt are widespread on public land and in our domestic gardens. Garden plants provide a reservoir of seeds that are constantly being spread into the surrounding environment, particularly those that are dispersed by wind or birds. In most cases there is no legal requirement for us to remove environmental weeds from our gardens, but if we don't then the threat to the local environment will always remain, as will the workload for the local Landcare and Coastcare groups!

Priorities

Boneseed has been identified as a species that could potentially be eradicated from Bruny Island, which would be a fantastic achievement. Over the last ten years most large plants have been removed and it is now a matter of getting rid of small ones whenever we see them until the seed supply in the soil is exhausted.

Spanish Heath is an emerging issue on Bruny Island, but has not yet made its way to Dennes Pt (there are small infestations at Rat's Bay and near the entrance to Waterview). Keeping this species out of our patch is a high priority so look out for any on the road verges.