

Thesium australe R. Br

Austral Toadflax

Scientific Name: *Thesium australe* R.Br

Common Name: Austral Toadflax

Status:

Listed as **Vulnerable**

Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992, Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2009.

Also listed as **Vulnerable**

Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Identification:

Thesium australe is a slender, bright pale green or yellow green, laxly procumbent herbaceous, short-lived perennial plant to 50cm. Thesium is a hemi parasitic species, which means it is not parasitic at all stages of its life cycle.

Leaves: Simple, alternate, narrow, linear mostly to 3 cm by 2 mm wide, with entire margins and an acute apex.

Flowers: White, tubular, often with a greenish band, to 2 mm, borne on stems to 3 mm, singly or in small cymes in the leaf axils. Generally borne during spring, but flowering may last for some time if moisture levels are favourable.

Fruits: Nut-like drupes reaching 2.5 mm, crowned with a persistent ring of tepals, which become swollen at the base; as the fruits develop the keels they are ribbed with become more prominent.

Seeds: Soft and fleshy, 1-2 contained in each fruit.

Seed Dispersal/Reproduction: The life history and reproduction rates remain relatively unknown. As a hemiparasitic plant it may be difficult to cultivate as attachment to a host may prove difficult. Evidence does suggest it may grow from cuttings.

Habitat:

Found in grassland and grassy woodland at various altitudes, generally on deep alluviums or loamy soils - areas that are well watered or seasonally inundated. Often found in association with *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass), *Poa sieberiana* subsp. *seiberiana* (Fine-leaved Tussock Grass) and *Poa labillardieri* var. *labillardieri* (Tussock Grass).

Distribution:

Previously occurred from the Bunya Mountains to Tasmania (now considered extinct in Tasmania) in a variety of habitats ranging from waterways in hilly country, to gullies around creeks and floodplains.



Whole Plant



Mature fruit



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Threats:

Fires occurring at the wrong time of year, at too great an intensity and too frequently lead to interruptions to the reproductive cycle, loss of plants and loss of seed banks.

Alternatively, if fire is excluded from the landscape, natural regeneration of species such as thesium that seem to be stimulated by fire can become locally extinct as, in some situations the absence of fire allows an overstorey to develop which shades out species in the ground layer.

As *T. triandra* is a highly palatable, productive perennial grass it is often targeted by grazing stock, which in some cases leads to it being grazed out of an area and consequentially *T. australe* as well.

Disturbance of the habitat through development, clearing and roadside maintenance is also a threat to the species.

The dumping of rubbish, leading to degradation of habitat, the hindering of revegetation, and the establishment of weeds in the habitat is also a major threat.

Due to the small, fragmented populations of this plant, a loss of genetic variation may pose the greatest threat to its resilience.

The South Burnett Regional Council is responsible for the management and protection of remnant vegetation that occurs on council controlled reserves and local road reserves in accordance with Section 60 of the Local Government Act 2009.

An application must be made to council to clear or burn any of the council controlled reserves or roadside reserves in the South Burnett Region so that the impact on this species and other threatened species may be assessed and managed or minimised.



Close-up of flower & green fruit and pungent pointed foliage



Foliage

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For Application and Referral Forms Visit:

www.derm.qld.gov.au or www.environment.qld.gov.au

This publication is an initiative of South Burnett Regional Council's Natural Resources Management department and was compiled with information and photographs provided by Caroline Haskard, Vegetation Matters. This information is provided as a guide only and South Burnett Regional Council accepts no responsibility or liability for the accuracy of the information presented.



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