



# WEEDS

# NARROW LEAF COTTON BUSH

## Glossary

### **Inflorescence**

The arrangement of the flowers and flower axes.

### **Lanceolate**

Shaped like a lance.

### **Perennial**

With a life span extending over more than 2 growing seasons.

### **Rhizomes**

A creeping stem, usually below ground from which new aerial shoots arise.

### **Umbel**

An umbrella like inflorescence.

## For More Information

### **Contact**

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## Gomphocarpus fruticosus

### **Introduction**

Cottonbush is a declared category P1, P2 plant by the Agriculture Protection Board in Western Australia.

These categories specify the plant must be prevented from spreading or being introduced into an area and eradicated from existing areas.

Also known as the Swan Plant, it is an escaped garden shrub, that has spread into disturbed, moist sites, such as: areas of broken ground along water courses and storm water drains, and bushland.

### **Origin**

South Africa, the Mediterranean.

### **Lifeform**

Perennial shrub.

### **Description**

S-shaped stalk with shrub habit; up to 1.5 m tall.

**Leaves:** Lanceolate; opposite; 4-12.5 cm long

**Flowers/Seedhead:** White/cream inflorescence; a drooping umbel of flowers.

### **Reproduction & Dispersal**

Spreads by seeds and lateral roots. Produces numerous light fluffy seeds that are easily dispersed by water and wind and to a lesser extent, spreads by rhizomes. Each flowering

head of the plant is capable of producing many seeds.

### **Growing Habit**

It is capable of forming dense thickets from its root suckering rhizomes.

### **Distribution**

Clustered populations around Perth to scattered populations inland to Esperance.

### **Flowering Season**

February - July.

### **Fruits**

Seed pods are green turning brown with age; inflated; thin-walled; 4-6 cm long; sparsely covered in soft spines; narrowing to a point.

### **Effect(s) on Ecosystem**

The plant is poisonous, producing a milky sap which can cause skin irritations, and potentially, death in animals that consume it.

### **Control**

#### **Manual Removal**

Wear protective clothing to avoid skin or eye contact with the milky sap. Place a bag over the entire bush and hand pull small plants, ensuring the complete root system is removed. Regrowth should be hand-pulled and disposed of before setting seed.

Remove any seed heads. Seed-free foliage may be composted. Plants containing seed should be stacked and burnt on site.

#### **Chemical Treatment**

Larger plants can be sprayed with glyphosate; the cut-paint method is effective. Herbicides are best used late spring-early summer, before seed set.

Please see "Herbicides and Pesticides" fact sheet for more information about spraying chemicals.

