

Bushy asparagus

Asparagus aethiopicus

Family

Liliaceae (lily)

Also known as

Possum tail, *Asparagus sprengeri*, *Asparagus meyeri*, *Asparagus densiflorus*, *Protasparagus aethiopicus*

Where is it originally from?

South Africa

What does it look like?

Two growth forms are known: (1) cultivar 'Sprengeri' is a trailing scrambler with stems to 2 m that are branched towards tips, and with sparse cladodes (flattened leaf-like stems, 10-25 mm) that are flat in cross section, and (2) cultivar 'Meyeri' has erect stems to 700 mm forming a dense cylinder, and is covered in cladodes (5-10 mm) that are triangular in cross section. Both cultivars have small tubers, thin wiry stems, tiny pinkish flowers and bright red berries.

Are there any similar species?

Climbing asparagus (*Asparagus scandens*), and asparagus fern (*A. setaceus*, also known as *A. plumosa*) are similar.

Why is it weedy?

Dense, patch-forming habit, tough, long-lived tubers that resprout, moderate to slow growth rate, and seeds that are widely distributed. Tolerates moderate to high rainfall.

How does it spread?

Birds spread the seeds, and tubers resprout and are spread by soil and water movement. Common as both a garden and house plant, and occasionally found in hedges.

What damage does it do?

Can smother shrubs and other low vegetation.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Bush edges, low-growing habitats and dune vegetation, especially near gardens.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Dig out tubers. Dispose of at a refuse transfer station or burn. Leave rest of cut material on site to rot down.
2. Spray (spring-early summer only): glyphosate (20ml/L). Do not add penetrant when spraying against tree trunks. Spray lightly, avoiding runoff.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Tubers often resprout after spraying, stems break at ground level so plants cannot be pulled. Tuber fragments usually survive digging. Always follow up on treated areas at least 6-monthly. Replant treated areas where possible after 2-3 treatments to establish dense ground cover and minimise reinvasion.



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