

# Smilax

## *Asparagus asparagoides*

### Family

Liliaceae (lily)

### Also known as

Bridal creeper, *Asparagus praecox*, *A. medeoloides*, *Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*

### Where is it originally from?

South Africa

### What does it look like?

Scrambling or twining perennial with dense clusters of white, fleshy, tuberous roots and twisted, thin, wiry, branched green stems (<3 m). Ovalish, pointed leaves (10-35 x 4-15 mm) with 7 veins, one of which appears at each node, are actually cladodes (flattened leaf-like stems). Greenish-white flowers (5-6 mm, Jul-Aug) are followed by round red berries (6-10 mm) each containing 2-8 tiny black seeds.

### Are there any similar species?

Large leaf-like cladodes distinguish smilax from other *Asparagus* species.

### Why is it weedy?

Has a moderate growth rate, tough, long-lived tubers resprout at will, and the plentiful seeds are distributed widely. Tolerates moderate shade to full sun, low to moderate rainfall, salt and wind, but prefers good drainage.

### How does it spread?

Birds spread the seeds. Tubers resprout and are spread by soil and water movement. Common sources include roadsides, hedgerows and wastelands.

### What damage does it do?

Forms dense patches and smothers low growing plants and seedlings, usually in low canopy habitats. Can eliminate vulnerable native coastal species.

### Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Poor or volcanic soils, bare rock, sand, coastal and estuarine zone, bluffs, rocks, gumland, pohutukawa forest, and inshore islands.

### What can I do to get rid of it?

Maintain rolling front of control.

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

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

### What can I do to stop it coming back?

Tubers resprout after spraying, stems break at ground level so plants cannot be pulled out. Grubbing tubers can expose soil, allowing seeds to germinate. Always follow up on treated areas at least 6-monthly. Seeds probably not long-lived. Replant treated areas where possible after 2-3 treatments to establish dense ground cover and minimise



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Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Carolyn Lewis

reinvasion.



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