

# Watsonia

## *Watsonia meriana* 'Bulbillifera'

### Family

Iridaceae (iris) family

### Also known as

*Watsonia bulbillifera*, bugle lily

### Where is it originally from?

South Africa

### What does it look like?

Gladioli-like, clump-forming, summer-green perennial (<2 m tall) with stout, fibrous coated corms (5-7 cm diameter) that multiply at ground level. Stems (2 cm diameter) are stiffly erect, and light green leaves (2-5 x 30-60 cm) arising from base are sword-shaped, folded, tough and fibrous. Curved and trumpet-shaped brick-red or salmon-pink flowers (3-4 cm diameter, Oct-Nov) on long stems are followed by distinctive shiny, red-brown clusters of aerial corms (10-25 mm long), 'bulbils' along the stems. No seed is produced in New Zealand.

### Are there any similar species?

Similar to other *Watsonia* species, montbretia, and gladiolus, but is the only species with aerial corms. Flowers of garden cultivars can also be white, rose and pink.

### Why is it weedy?

Forms dense infestations and thick underground carpets of corms and roots, crowding out other species. Each bulbil along the stem can form a new plant, and it tolerates a wide range of growing conditions. It's a particular problem in bare land especially damp sites, riverbeds, streamsides, fernland, tussockland, and sparse low-growing shrubland. Tolerates high to low temperatures but is intolerant of shade.

### How does it spread?

Soil and water movement, dumped vegetation, and road graders all spread the corms. Common on frequently-sprayed or damaged sites, especially roadsides, wasteland, railway lines and industrial land.

### What damage does it do?

Smothers ground in open areas, preventing the establishment of native plant seedlings. Can cause silt to accumulate on alluvial sites, leading to flooding or changes in habitat.

### Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Bare land especially damp sites, riverbeds, streamsides, fernland, tussockland and sparse low-growing shrubland.

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

Work downhill, downstream and in from edges.

1. Dig out small sites. Dispose of at a refuse transfer station, burn or bury.
2. Spray when in green leaf (spring-summer): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (3g) + glyphosate (150ml) + penetrant per 10L water.

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

Corms often resprout after spraying. Maintain clean roadsides. Follow up annually in spring-summer.



[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



Photo: Carolyn Lewis