

Bushy Asparagus

Asparagus densiflorus

**Total Control Plant under the
West Coast Regional Pest Plant
Management Strategy**



Suspected sightings of this Total Control Plant should be reported promptly to the West Coast Regional Council

National Pest Plant Accord Status

Bushy Asparagus is listed in the 2008 National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand. For more information refer to the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website at www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa

Where has Bushy Asparagus come from?

Bushy Asparagus has been introduced from its native South Africa to the wider Australasia—Pacific region, including New Zealand, for ornamental planting purposes. Bushy Asparagus Feather is listed in the 2008 National Pest Plant Accord and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand. For more information refer to MAF Biosecurity New Zealand, www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa

What does Bushy Asparagus look like?

Bushy Asparagus, also known as fern asparagus, emerald feather, Sprenger's fern, Sprenger's Asparagus, foxtail fern and possum tail, has two growth forms, one trailing and one bushy. Similar species are Climbing Asparagus (*A. scandens*) and Asparagus Fern (*A. setaceus* or *plumosa*).

Cultivar "Sprenger's" is a trailing scrambler with stems which branch towards the tips, and sparse cladodes (flattened leaf-like stems) (5-10mm) that are flat in cross-section.

Cultivar "Meyeri" has erect stems to 700mm forming a dense cylinder, and is covered in cladodes (5-10mm) that are triangular in cross-section.

Both cultivars have small tubers, thin wiry stems, tiny pinkish flowers and bright red berries which each contain a single seed. Plant spread is by both seed dispersal (mostly birds) and the underground spread of the tuberous root systems.



Top right: Dense thicket of Bushy Asparagus
Above: Bushy Asparagus berries [photos T James]

Why is Bushy Asparagus a Pest Plant?

Both forms of this species can quickly become pest plants because both seeds and pieces of root, spread by water, birds or poor disposal of garden waste, take hold readily. At risk habitats are bush edges, low growing habitats and coastal areas. Dense, tough and long lived patches of the plants can form, making them difficult to control. Bushy asparagus is also tolerant of the higher rainfall areas found on the West Coast.

What are the best methods of control?

A combination of both manual and herbicide methods works best for controlling Bushy Asparagus. As tubers can regenerate from fragments left from digging and/or survive spraying, you may need to treat the same ground 2-3 times before it is safe to replant with other plants.

Manual Methods

Handpull small plants and dig out tubers. Dispose of small whole plants and any tubers carefully (plastic rubbish bags to council waste disposal or burn). Leave other cut down material on site to rot down. Do not compost any parts of this plant.

Herbicide Methods

For small areas, weed-wipe through spring—early summer only, with glyphosate product (333ml/L) and no penetrant.

For larger patches, either:

- Spray through spring—early summer only, with glyphosate product (20ml/L). Do not add penetrant when spraying against any tree trunks. Spray lightly, avoiding runoff, OR
- Cut stems at 60cm above ground and spray/paint remaining stems (5g metsulfuron/L)

For personal safety please use all herbicides as per manufacturer's labelling

Biocontrols

There are no biocontrol agents for Bushy Asparagus known at present.

Where can I get more help?

For further information call either of the Regional Weedbusters Co-ordinators. They are:

Mary Traves: Environmental Information Officer, West Coast Regional Council (768 0466 or 0508 800 118)

Tom Belton: Technical Support Officer Biosecurity & Weeds, Department of Conservation, West Coast - Tai Poutini Conservancy, Hokitika (03 756 9100)



www.weedbusters.org.nz

The West Coast Regional Council does not accept liability for any advice given on this sheet regarding application of herbicides for pest plant control. The brand names listed imply neither endorsement of those brands, nor criticism of any other brands not listed.