

COOTAMUNDRA WATTLE

(*Acacia baileyana*)

Angela Murphy



Weed: Cootamundra wattle flowers

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Lynton Bond



Weed: Cootamundra wattle infestation opposite
HMAS Harman

Eurobodalla Shire Council



Note: lower leaflet pair points back towards stem

Weed: Cootamundra wattle seed pods

Why is Cootamundra wattle a weed?

- Although this species is native to Australia, it has established well outside of its natural range (a limited region of southern NSW) and outside of this region is considered a weed
- Fast growing
- Seed has a high survival rate (soil stored seed remains viable for many decades and germinates prolifically after fire)
- In the local region, it is usually found as isolated individuals or as dense thickets in forests, woodlands, open country and pine plantations
- Excludes light and forms a dense layer of leaf and pod remains on the soil surface. This eliminates many indigenous species, but allows many exotic grasses to flourish. In one case in the ACT a dense thicket has placed additional pressure on the habitat of a nationally endangered species, button wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides*)
- Hybridises with a number of other *Acacia* species, including silver wattle and black wattle, which some believe may have undesirable longer term effects on gene pools of these species
- Continued financial and labour cost to the community in those areas where it has to be (or is desirably) removed

Description

Plant: small tree up to 10m, but usually 5-8m tall and single trunked, with a dense, spreading canopy, bark is rough and black at base of trunk and smooth, grey on branches

Leaves: grey/silvery to blue-green, 'feathery' or 'fern like', lower leaf pair points back towards stem

Seeds: shiny black in flat, brown pods up to 7cm long (often with a grey powdery appearance)

Flowers: prolific, golden yellow, ball shaped, borne in racemes (a cluster of stalked flowers branching off of a single stem) towards the end of the branchlets in late winter to early spring

Dispersal via

- Ants and birds use the seed as a food source and transport them from place to place
- In water
- Seed pods may be blown short distances
- Main initial method of dispersal via human activities, such as ornamental plantings that have spread

Fact sheets are available from the Molonglo Catchment Group website. Visit www.molonglocatchment.com.au or call 6128 3376 for more information about getting involved in your living environment.

Information used to compile this fact sheet was kindly provided by the Southern Tablelands and South Coast Noxious Plants Committee: www.southeastweeds.org.au



Status

Cootamundra wattle is not listed as a noxious weed in the NSW section of the Molonglo Catchment however it is an important species for control due to its invasive nature. In the ACT, Cootamundra wattle is a class 4 Pest Plant whose supply is prohibited. It is recommended that this plant is not purchased or grown anywhere in the Molonglo Catchment.

Look-alikes

Native plants can often be confused with weed species. The following information aims to assist you with accurate identification to prevent the loss of our declining natives. If you are unsure what species you are dealing with, take advantage of the identification services on offer from your local weeds officer (either at your local council or the ACT's Parks, Conservation and Lands) before carrying out any controls.

Acacia baileyana 'Purpurea', a purple leaved cultivar of the Cootamundra wattle, is available from some nurseries but is also weedy and should be avoided.

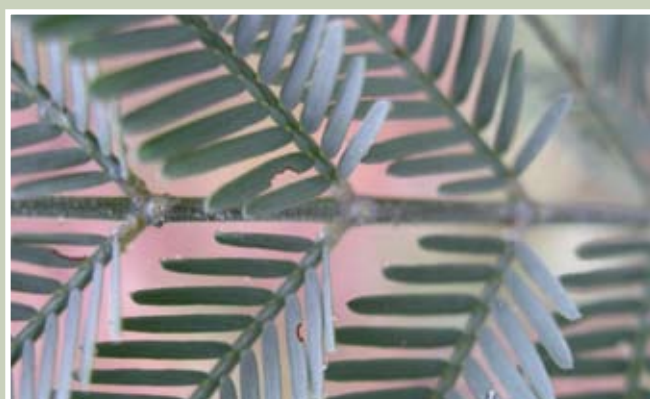
Lynton Bond



Weed: *Acacia baileyana* 'Purpurea'

Silver wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) is quite similar and should not be removed. A defining feature is that it doesn't have the backwards pointing pair of lower leaf pinnae. Silver wattle also colonises heavily.

Lynton Bond



Native: silver wattle

Lynton Bond



Native: silver wattle.

Note the similarity between this wattle and the Cootamundra wattle on the front page

Control methods

Pull young seedlings by hand. Cut larger plants off at ground level. Younger plants may occasionally resprout if not cut low enough, though they rarely reshoot, thus eliminating the need to apply chemicals to the cut stump. Take care not to disturb the existing ground litter to prevent germination of soil stored seed. Seed can remain viable for long periods of time so regular monitoring will be required to remove seedlings as they germinate. For advice on what time of year to implement the following management options, see the Molonglo Catchment Weed Control Calendar.

Avoid growing this plant. Ask your local 'bush friendly' nursery for alternative species.