

MEDIA RELEASE

Environmental Weed of the Month – Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*)

Common names

African Boxthorn, Boxthorn, Cape Boxthorn

Family

Solanaceae

Origin

South Africa

Description

A shrubby plant, capable of reaching 2-3m in height and sprawling 3m across. Stems are light brown and hairless when young, maturing to grey/brown and slightly fissured when mature. Long spikes up to 15cm long occur on the mature stems, with much smaller spikes growing on younger stems. Leaves (up to 4cm long) are light green, hairless and either grow alternately up the stem or occur in groups of 5-12 in stem joints. Flowers are small, tubular and white/lilac in colour. They have 4 or 5 petals and grow singly or in pairs in the leaf forks. These develop into shiny egg-shaped berries, (5-12mm long) that mature into a deep orange or red colour and contain small seeds.

How do they spread?

The main method of dispersal is when birds eat the fruit and spread seeds in their droppings.

Why are they an issue?

Their tolerance of various soil types, temperatures and environments make them capable of establishing almost anywhere. They form dense stands,



Photo Credit: Carolyn Lewis



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excluding the growth of native vegetation. When growing in coastal areas, Petrels and Shearwaters can become entangled when trying to reach their burrows underneath.

Where are you likely to find it?

Boxthorn currently grows along the cliffs and coastal areas between Headstone and Rocky Point. It is yet to be reported growing further inland however as chickens and other birds feed on their berries and spread seeds we may begin to see its distribution spreading.

How can I control it?

1. Small plants can hand weeded with ease. Plants can be left on site.
2. Over spray with glyphosate (10ml/L).
3. Basal Bark application with 2L Garlon to 60L of diesel.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OFFICER

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