Spanish Heath *Erica lusitanica*

Environmental Weed Factsheet

Origin: South - Western Europe

Size: 1m– 2m H, 0.5m–1.5m W

Seeds: October to January

Flowers: June to September

Best removal time: March to August

What it does…

This weed invades areas of mid and ground storey, smothering and displacing indigenous groundcovers, herbs, grasses and orchids. It is very flammable.

What it looks like…

Spanish Heath is an evergreen, slender erect woody shrub. It is often mistaken for the native Common Heath (Epacris impressa), which is to the right of the Spanish Heath in the photo (left). The flowers are in pendulous clusters of 2-4 on the ends of very short side branchlets. Flowers vary from white to pinkish. Dead flowers persist on the plant before seeding in spring to early summer.

How it spreads…

Each plant can produce 9 million seeds annually. They spread via:

*   wind.
*   water.
*   animals.
*   contaminated soil.
*   spreading root systems.
*   dumping of garden plants
*   Sold at some nurseries, markets and fetes. Buyer beware!

How to remove it…

Remove by Hand: Small plants can be hand pulled and larger plants can be dug out with a mattock or garden fork.
Plants break off easily and remaining roots will reshoot. This should be done prior to spring, before the plant seeds.

Cut & Paint: Larger plants can be cut off at the base and then the stump painted immediately with an undiluted glyphosate-based product.

Spray with Herbicide: For large infestations where native vegetation is sparse, brush cut the spanish heath and spot spray regrowth with a glyphosate-based product. This is best done in early autumn before flowering. Speak to your supplier for information on relevant herbicides and quantities.

Please contact the Yarra Ranges Council's Environment Department on 1300 368 333 for more information on weed removal techniques, support and training available and details of active community groups in your area.

Indigenous alternatives to plant...

Many shrub alternatives exist that are indigenous to the Yarra Ranges region and would make great substitutes for the Spanish Heath. Some alternatives include:

Pink Beard-heath,
Leucopogon ericoides

Common Heath,
Epacris impressa

How to dispose of weeds:

By disposing of environmental weeds correctly you can prevent re-infestation on your property and elsewhere.

- Landfill (Weed Wipeout Tip vouchers available for some species).
- Green waste bin ensures that weeds are not able to spread.
- Woody weed stems can be bundled for green collection twice per annum.
- Composting (excluding seed heads or species with vegetative reproduction, e.g. Wandering Trad).
- Burning in accordance with Council and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) prescribed burning periods and regulations.
- Recovery and transfer stations available for weed tipping are Healesville, Wesburn, Coldstream, Lysterfield and Montrose.

Bare ground attracts WEEDS!!!

For effective long term weed control we recommend:

- Habitat Restoration
    - Encourages indigenous and native plant to regenerate
    - Revegetation - replanting indigenous vegetation
- Productive land use.
- Replace with non invasive garden species.

Using Chemicals:

Non chemical treatments is often the most effective and safe option especially on smaller scale infestations.

Where chemical use is undertaken:

- Always follow the manufacture's guidelines when using chemicals.
- Wear protective clothing and eyewear
- On purchasing your herbicide, always ask for a Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or refer to the manufacturer's website for specific safety guidelines and information.
- Some herbicides will kill other plants and not just the target species.
- Near waterways herbicides can be very poisonous to aquatic life.
- Use chemicals sparingly and be sure that you are using the right chemical and application technique.
- Ensure the weather conditions are suitable (e.g. minimal wind and no rain expected)
- Apply herbicides at the correct time during the plant's growth cycle so you get the best results..

Yarra Ranges Council