

ASPARAGUS FERN

*Protasparagus aethiopicus*CLIMBERS AND
GROUND COVERS

Family Liliaceae

Origin South Africa

Description A dense, scrambling vine with long arching stems up to 2m long. One of the most significant garden escapees on the NSW coast it survives well on dunes, headlands and in rainforest understorey. In some areas the species has the potential to entirely displace native species and become the dominant ground cover².

Stems/Leaves The green stems have small hooked prickles. The leaves are actually flattened stems (cladodes)⁸. The leaves can be single but usually are arranged in clusters of three to eight⁵.

Flowers The small flowers are pinkish-white in colour and flower mainly spring to autumn². The flowers are fragrant⁸.

Fruit/Seed The small globular fruit ripens to a bright red colour², from late winter to spring. Dispersal is via birds, skinks and the nursery trade⁸.

Root system Rhizomatous crown and tuberous roots⁸.

Removal techniques

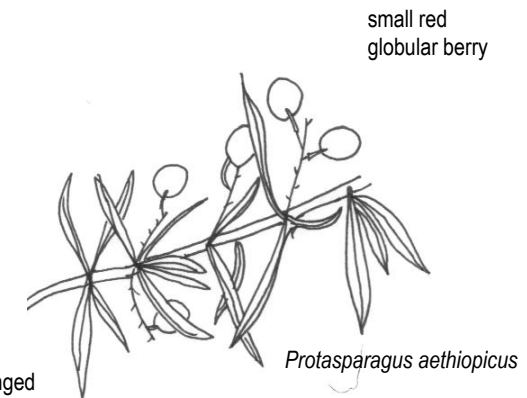
Manual Each stem contains lots of prickles so its best to wear sturdy garden gloves whilst handling this weed. Cut all the stems back leaving only a 10 cm length above ground. Scrape away soil and debris from around the woody crown until it is left exposed. Using a long handled fork loosen the soil around the crown, and with a sharp knife/spade dig into the soil until the crown is loose from the soil. Hold the crown and cut the remaining roots. Leave the roots and storage tubers as the tuberous roots store water and are not capable of producing new plants. Ensure that all of the crown is removed as any remaining piece will re-grow²¹. Also remove any fruit⁸.

Chemical Chemical controls are available. Spray with glyphosate at a ratio of 1:75 with surfactant²².

Notes

After fire events this species germinates and re-shoots from the rhizome⁸.

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globular berrygreen leaves arranged
in clusters from 1-8*Protasparagus aethiopicus*

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