

environmental weeds

Some weedy shrubs
of the South Coast

WEEDY SHRUBS



The best way to help prevent the spread of these shrubs is not to grow them in your garden, and not to dump them in the bush. Dumping is often responsible for moving seed from gardens to nearby public land.

There are drought-hardy natives or less invasive exotics that could be used instead. A few are shown at the end of this leaflet, and your local nursery may be able to suggest others.

There are some shrubs or small trees, shown overleaf, which are grown more for their colourful berries than their flowers. These berries are attractive to birds, and the seed is then spread by them far from the parent plants. While it is nice to “feed the birds”, there are many native shrubs and small trees which will provide a more natural diet for them, and not spread weeds into the bush.

Milkworts (*Polygala myrtifolia* and *P. virgata*) are common coastal garden escapees, found on cliffs, waste ground and forest edges around towns. Myrtle-leaf milkwort also grows in sand dunes. They could be mistaken for peas, with their large showy flowers, but they lack the large standard petal at the top (see photo of African scurf-pea below), and the keeled lower petal is fringed, unlike that of the peas.



Myrtle-leaf milkwort

Flowers of Myrtle-leaf milkwort (*Polygala myrtifolia*) are large and colourful, making it a popular and hardy garden plant.

A myrtle-leaf milkwort seedling is usually simple to remove. Even large plants can be hand-pulled quite easily in moist or sandy soil.



Twiggly milkwort

Twiggly milkwort (*Polygala virgata*) has narrower leaves with a glossy upper surface and solid purple flowers with darker veins in the petals and a purple fringe on the keel.

Twiggly milkwort plants are slender and leggy, unlike the more compact myrtle-leaf milkwort. Both reach about 1-2 metres high.



African scurf-pea

African scurf-pea (*Psoralea pinnata*) has blue pea flowers and divided leaves with 5-11 narrow leaflets.

It grows to about 3 metres high.

for more information please contact:

Illawarra District Noxious

Weeds Authority

(02) 4233 1129

Shoalhaven City Council

(02) 4429 3111

Eurobodalla Shire Council

(02) 4474 1000

Bega Valley Shire Council

(02) 6499 2222



Hawthorn

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) was used as a hedging plant originally, a living alternative to barbed wire. Now it is a common weed of farming areas, particularly in cooler climates.



Firethorn

Firethorn (*Pyracantha* species) is also thorny. Two species are shown here, with orange and red berries. Forms with yellow berries also occur.



Cotoneaster

Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* species) does not have thorns. There are a number of species, varying in leaf size and fruit colour. Cotoneaster, hawthorns and pyracantha are all in the same family as apples and pears; all have similar white or pinkish flowers.



Japanese hawthorn

Japanese hawthorn (*Raphiolepis umbellata*) and Indian hawthorn (*R. indica*) are popular coastal shrubs, salt tolerant and compact. Both have blue-black berries and Indian hawthorn has finely toothed leaves.



African boxthorn

African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) is another old thorny hedging plant. Its bird-dispersed fruits mean it usually appears under trees in farming areas. There are local infestations on sea cliffs near coastal towns.



Chinese boxthorn

Chinese boxthorn (*Lycium barbarum*) is less common. Its purple flowers distinguish it from African boxthorn, whose flowers are usually white, and may have a purple blotch on each petal.



Grow these instead*

Here are a few suggestions for shrubs which are suitable for south coast gardens.



NSW Christmas bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) has white flowers; followed by red bracts, extending the floral display to several weeks.



White correa (*Correa alba*) is highly salt tolerant and flowers mainly in winter.



Native rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*) is also good for coastal gardens.



Californian lilac (*Ceanothus* hybrids) is a fast-growing shrub with blue flowers.