

Control of Hedge Wattle in the Wannan Flora Reserve:

Identification of non-target species

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club
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Background

Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*) is a species of acacia native to this area that has attractive flowers and is great for small birds seeking a secure nest site or protection from raptors BUT it can become a serious invasive pest.

This very spiny shrub can, in certain situations, form thickets that completely exclude almost all understory plants. That is a disaster in heathland communities because it results in a permanent loss of species and can be a great harbor for rabbits.

Hedge Wattle responds to mechanical site disturbance and fire but, unlike most other wattles, will also readily germinate in the absence of either fire or disturbance. Frequent fires will eliminate the new seedlings but will likely burn the important old, hollow-bearing eucalypts.

Where Hedge Wattle can be contained, as in farm shelterbelts on grazed paddocks adjacent, sheep or cattle prevent its spread. If one wants Hedge Wattle in nature plantings where stock are excluded (e.g. for habitat for small birds) then be prepared to control its spread.

Hedge Wattles will not re-grow if cut off below the lowest branch/twig on the trunk.

Identifying Hedge Wattle and non-target species

There are a number of native species that have a passing resemblance to Hedge Wattle (*A. paradoxa*). You need to be able to recognise them so that these **non-target plants are not removed**. If in doubt do not remove the plant. Seek guidance.

At this site the plants that might be at risk of accidental removal are:

- ***Bursaria spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria)** – has a very sharp spine below some leaf axils on the stems and branches and a few spines elsewhere. The smooth 2-4 cm-long leaves have rounded ends and are never wavy or crinkled.
- ***Melicytus dentatus* (Tree Violet)** – has a few spines off the stems and branches; the leaves are longish (2-5 cm), narrow and with a blunt end.
- ***Daviesia ulicifolia* (Gorse Bitter-pea)** – has sharp tips to ‘leaves’ (phylodes) and spines on the ends of branchlets. There are no spines on the hairy stems.
- ***Acacia verticillata* (Prickly Moses)** – the ‘leaves’ (phylodes) have sharp tips and are in whorls. There are no spines on the branches or stems.

Hedge Wattle is the only one with a **dense mass of fine, sharp spines on the stems** AND
a **dense mass of small, wavy ‘leaves’ (phylodes) with pointed ends**.

Volunteers should take a small seedling of Hedge Wattle around with them, as a reminder of the target!

Hedge Wattle seedling



Sweet Bursaria seedling



Tree Violet



Gorse Bitter-pea



Prickly Moses

