

Asparagus densiflorus Asparagus Fern

Description

Originating in South Africa, Asparagus Fern is a multi-branched perennial shrub or scrambler forming a dense mat of tuberous roots. Branches grow to 60cm with a covering of small spines.

Flowers appear in late summer as bell-shaped, white-pale pink clusters. The fruit are red berries to 8mm wide containing 1 to a few black seeds about 4mm in diameter, occurring winter/early spring.

Seeds are spread by birds, water and dumping. Asparagus Fern can also reshoot from rhizome pieces left in the ground or dumped as garden waste.

Asparagus Fern is a shade-loving plant and tends to grow in the understorey, particularly in disturbed soils. Asparagus Fern also thrives in urban areas such as Strathfield where disturbance is common in parks and bushland reserves.

The Problem

Asparagus Fern is invasive and poses a significant threat to our parks and bushland reserves. This weed may cause distress to neighbouring properties both through the plant stems spreading over boundary lines and birds depositing seeds in their droppings.

Seeds germinate readily and will start new infestations. Due to the plants' invasive nature, treatment to contain this weed must start immediately. As this weed is likely to continually grow and spread, total removal is recommended.

Noxious Weed

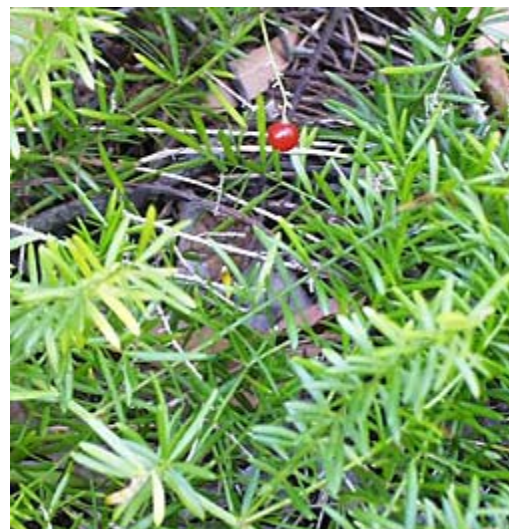
Whilst Asparagus Fern is not a declared noxious weed in Strathfield it is considered an environmental weed. It is important that environmental weeds are destroyed, as they can affect human health, or can be invasive in the natural environment killing the native flora and reducing the natural biodiversity. Native animals may also be affected due to the loss of their natural habitat.

Control

Manual Control is the most effective method for removing Asparagus Fern.

The growing points of Asparagus Fern must be removed below the surface. The numerous water tubers can be left in the ground, as they contain no food and the plant cannot reproduce from them.

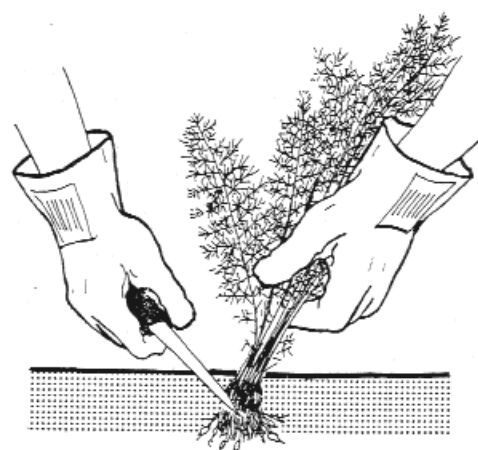
Wear thick gloves. With secateurs cut off stems about 20cm above soil level and bag. Don't cut too low or you may lose sight of where the crown is. Larger berries will ripen if left lying on the ground.



Asparagus Fern with ripe red berry. Source: Kur-ing-gai Council

Check where stems join crown. Use a knife, peter lever or mattock to cut around crown to sever roots and water tubers. These may be left in place. Lift out crown, checking it is entire and bag.

Follow up: Seed lasts a few years in the soil, so watch out for seedlings. Use a knife to ease these out - usually the whole plant will come up easily. Seedlings may sprout where you have removed larger mature plants.



Further Information

For further information please contact Environmental Services on 9748 9999.

References

Asparagus Fern Sydney Weeds Committees
www.sydneyweeds.org.au

Weed Facts Sutherland Shire Council
www.sutherland.nsw.gov.au