

Telegraph weed

Heterotheca grandiflora



- Our beaches under threat!

Introducing the beast

- A member of the asteraceae family
- Annual plant that grows to 2m tall
- Has a small yellow daisy like flower
- Prolific seed producer



Where did it come from?

- Telegraph weed is a native to Southern California in the United States where it forms dense colonies on dunes and beaches.
- It prefers open, disturbed sites with dry sandy soils.
- It is well adapted for survival in arid, sandy or well drained soils in temperate and subtropical areas.

How did it get to Queensland?



- Telegraph weed is also recorded at sites in the lower Hunter Valley in NSW.
- We don't know for sure how it got to the Gold Coast but believe it may have arrived with machinery when a pipeline was constructed on the Southport Spit approximately 20 years ago.

Where is it now?

- Telegraph weed is currently recorded at several locations on the Gold Coast. These are:
- Southport Spit
- Southern end of South Stradbroke Island
- Labrador foreshores
- Wavebreak Island



What is all the fuss about?



- Telegraph weed produces an enormous amount of wind dispersed seed.
- It rapidly colonizes disturbed areas and frontal dunes.
- It is unsightly and very invasive.
- It is a potential weed of dry, open sandy habitats throughout southern, central and western Queensland. Habitats at risk are dune areas, sandy river banks and potentially sandy desert country.

Where is it going?



- The answer is blowing in the wind.
- It is currently spreading in a northerly direction due to prevailing south easterly winds.
- Seeds can also stick to clothing, beach towels etc so it may be appearing on a beach near you!

Past control work



- Telegraph weed was flagged in the 90s for its weed potential and efforts were made in the mid 90s to control it.
- Infestations on South Stradbroke Island and Wavebreak Island were treated in 95 and 96.

Past control work



- Gold Coast City Council carried out extensive control work on the Southport Spit in June 1996.
- Unfortunately these earlier efforts and control were not followed up frequently enough to eliminate seedling plants and infestations were allowed to persist.

What's happening now?

- The campaign to eradicate telegraph weed is alive and well.
- Key players in control are Gold Coast City Council, Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water and Environmental Protection Agency.



What we have learnt.



- Plants can be easily controlled with herbicide.
- Operators ideally should perform control work on foot as young plants are difficult to find amongst other coastal plants.

Findings continued..

- Infestations need to be controlled at least every 6 months with some areas requiring a shorter interval between treatments.
- We have no information on seed longevity.
- As this weed is not yet declared in Queensland, eradication will require continued cooperation of all stakeholders.



What does the future hold?

- Although not declared at present, telegraph weed has undergone a weed risk assessment and is recommended for declaration as a class 2 pest in Queensland.



In conclusion..



- Make yourself familiar with telegraph weed.
- It may be spread by recreational uses as well as by wind dispersal so be prepared if it pops up at a beach near you.