

Threatened Species

Lepidium aschersonii – Spiny Peppergrass

Description

Spiny Peppergrass (*Lepidium aschersonii*) is a herb that sprouts annually from perennial, relatively short-lived underground root stock. In spring it puts up a fleshy rosette with basal leaves up to 12cm long, which often wither when flowering commences. The flowerhead is green and spindly with terminal spikes and tiny flowers. Flowering occurs from spring to autumn. After the seed has developed, the seed head dries off then often detaches from the plant allowing for wind dispersal of the seed.



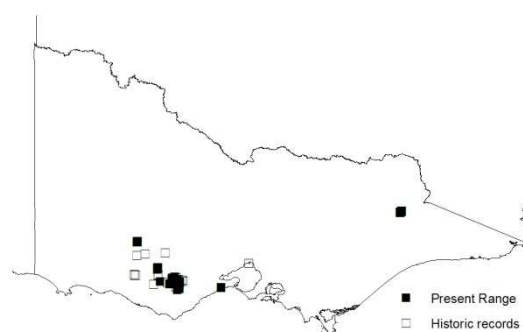
Spiny Peppergrass plant.

Conservation Status

Spiny Peppergrass is listed as 'Vulnerable' under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. It has been listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and is considered 'Endangered' in Victoria according to the DELWP's *Advisory List of Rare and Threatened Plants in Victoria 2014*.

Distribution

Endemic to mainland southern Australia, the Spiny Peppergrass occurs from north-eastern New South Wales along Southern Australia to Western Australia. There are currently thought to be approximately 30 populations that contain an estimated 25,000 – 100,000 plants in total. Within Victoria there are only approximately 18 currently known sites, mostly in the Western Basalt Plains region.



Habitat

Spiny Peppergrass is usually found in periodically wet sites around the margins of freshwater and saline marshes and shallow lakes on heavy black or clay soils.



Spiny Peppergrass flowerhead.

Lepidium aschersonii – Spiny Peppergrass

Decline and threats

Spiny Peppergrass has suffered an extensive decline in its distribution and abundance since European settlement. Remaining populations are sparsely distributed and isolated, often occurring in degraded habitat.

Threats to Spiny Peppergrass populations include:

- Excessive grazing by domestic stock and rabbits
- Risk of local extinction due to small population sizes
- Competition from introduced grasses and weeds
- Inappropriate fire regimes
- Altered hydrology
- Change in land use practices.

Existing conservation actions

Management actions carried out for Spiny Peppergrass:

- Annual population monitoring
- Assessing, managing and minimising threats
- Seed collection for storage in the seed bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens
- Propagating and reintroduction of Spiny Peppergrass plants to suitable habitats
- Preparing and implementing management prescriptions for ecological burning/disturbance
- Community involvement and awareness.



Kui Nursery workers from Colac weeding around reintroduced plants.

Help threatened species

- Contact DELWP to report sightings of threatened species.
- Get involved with your local volunteer group, LandCare, CoastCare, field naturalists or Friends of Groups.

For more information contact your local DELWP staff or visit the DELWP website at www.delwp.vic.gov.au.

For more information about threatened species in southwest Victoria and current projects, visit www.swifft.net.au

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