South African Weed Orchid

South African Weed Orchid (Disa bracteata) is an invasive weed in Victoria. Introduced to Australia from South Africa, this species spread via seeds and tubers, and competes with other plants. It was first recorded in Victoria in the 1990s.

Location and habitat

This information is relevant across Victoria, particularly in grasslands, woodlands and open areas around and to the west of Melbourne.

Image: Geoff Lay CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

General information

- South African Weed Orchid is the only weedy orchid in Victoria
- They flower in late spring-early summer, and produce seed in early-mid summer
- The plants grow from fleshy tubers and die back after seeding
- South African Weed Orchid is self-pollinating. It produces millions of tiny, light seeds that are distributed by the wind
- The orchid can also reproduce via tubers
- South African Weed Orchid competes with native plants, including orchids, grasses and other small plants, reducing the diversity of habitats
- This orchid is particularly common in disturbed areas

Methods

- Plants can be removed by hand or using spot spraying
- When removing by hand, dig deeply around the plant to remove all tubers. Tubers can regrow if not fully removed
- Remove plants before or during flowering, before they produce seeds
- Dispose of plants carefully, either by burning or placing in plastic bags in the sun, as seed can continue to mature
- Plants can be sprayed using herbicide before flowering. Follow chemical use regulations
- Avoid disturbing habitat, which can create opportunities for South African Weed Orchid to establish

Maintenance and monitoring

- Monitor habitat for appearance of South African Weed Orchid
- Following management, monitor weeded area in following years for reappearance
- Seeds can be spread on clothes, shoes, vehicles and tools. Clean thoroughly after visiting areas with South African Weed Orchid
- Record sightings through platforms such as iNaturalist to help researchers and land managers understand its spread
- In some areas in central Victoria, records can be reported to council, including Nilumbik Shire

Further information

If you have a conservation covenant, please consult with your Trust for Nature regional staff member to ensure land management activities are in line with your covenant deed.

For further advice and support, please contact Trust for Nature.

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Safety

Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when undertaking land management. Follow all label instructions on equipment and local regulations. Be mindful of weather conditions. Do not conduct land management on days of extreme or catastrophic fire danger or total fire ban.

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