

Section IV: Community

A short story

Joanna Seabrook, Eastern Hills Branch, WA Wildflower Society, Greening WA and Gordon Reid Foundation, Perth, WA, Australia.

My contribution here is purely subjective, but I think that any small piece of information can help fit in to the jigsaw we must make to try to halt the advance of this alien or it will overtake us.

I have in my driveway a very tall tree-like shrub which appears to be a hybrid of *Calothamnus gilesii* and *Calothamnus homalophyllus* (subsequently referred to as *Calothamnus* ×). It is a very prolific flowerer but appears to be somewhat opportunistic in that it flowers at slightly different times each year.

Many people have reached the conclusion that the seed of bridal creeper is dispersed by birds, I would like to go even

further and say it is dispersed by honeyeaters and that eating bridal creeper fruits is a learned behaviour on their part or we would have been overcome by this weed long before now.

Almost all of the hundreds of seedlings of bridal creeper which appear in my garden do so beneath nectar producing plants. This information does not seem to avail us much because we can't do away with the honeyeaters or the nectar producing plants. But the interesting thing that emerged was that, one year, under *Calothamnus* × I found 150 seedlings of bridal creeper, which of course, I removed. This seemed to indicate that it

flowered at the same time the bridal creeper was seeding. The following year there were no seedlings under *Calothamnus* × showing that perhaps it flowered at a different time than the creeper and that no seeds had lasted over 12 months.

This seems to tell the tale that the seeds of bridal creeper will not remain viable from one year to another or that every single one germinated the first winter, which would be unusual for seeds. The only other explanation is that they could be removed or eaten. In either case it seems very encouraging to think that, once the weed has been properly disposed of it will not return by way of seed, which may be remaining in waiting to grow for an indefinite period of many years, as in the way of some weed seed. I believe one of the most important things to know in the control of weeds is the length of time seeds will remain viable in the ground.

Boomerang Gorge Bridal Creeper Project

David Pike¹, Volunteer, Department of Conservation and Land Management, 37 Everingham Way, Carine, WA 6020, Australia.

Introduction

Boomerang Gorge is located in the southern part of Yanchep National Park, north of Perth, Western Australia. It is the site of an ancient collapsed cave system, and still has a stream and wetland area running through it. Although near the developed tourist area of the Park, Boomerang Gorge is surrounded by remnant vegetation; mostly limestone heath vegetation and tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) woodland. Up to 1994, the remnant vegetation of the gorge was badly infested by bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*); out-competing and replacing native plants and detracting from the gorges natural beauty.

History

It is thought that bridal creeper was introduced into Yanchep National Park as a garden plant, being grown outside one of the tram carriages overlooking Boomerang Gorge. The tram carriages were

rented out as holiday accommodation for many years.

A wheelchair accessible limestone trail was constructed through Boomerang Gorge in 1981 for 'The Year of the Disabled'. Several people involved with the trail project have said they remember seeing "a couple of bridal creeper plants" along the gorge at that time. In the 15 years since then the weed has spread at least 5½ km out from the gorge, and now covers most of the limestone outcrop areas on the eastern side of Loch McNess. Seed spread appears to be by silver-eye birds which, liking good vegetation cover, do not stray across the lake. Hence there does not appear to be any bridal creeper on the western side. Bridal creeper seems to favour limestone outcrop areas in the Park, possibly due to water retention and insulation from summer heat provided by the rock crevices.

Boomerang Gorge Bridal Creeper Removal Group

The project described below was only possible with the help of members of the community. In 1993 a group, the Boomerang Gorge Bridal Creeper Removal Group (Boomerang Gorge BCRG) was formed to eradicate the bridal creeper menace from

Boomerang Gorge. The history and activities of this group are described by Vines (1996).

Bridal creeper removal

The area being covered by our project is bordered by the rim of Boomerang Gorge, an area of approximately 20 ha. A Works Program for the project is drawn up each year, with a list of action points etc. Senior Ranger at Yanchep, Ron Shimmon, as project facilitator (through the Yanchep National Park Advisory Committee), ensures that the management plan for the park and volunteer regulations are adhered to.

Because of the environmental sensitivity of the Boomerang Gorge area it was decided early in the project that the use of herbicides, at least in the western half of the Gorge, was not appropriate. This decision was backed up by the recently published results of Curtin University tests on the effects of herbicides on frog species in wetland areas. Of course this has left us with manual removal as the only other option.

As with all bushland weeding/regeneration projects, it is not effective to have people carrying out odd bits of weeding here and there. A concerted effort is needed in one area to totally clear bridal creeper before moving on. An enlargement of the small Boomerang Gorge area was made from the Park map. The resultant map was used to mark the area into sections on a 'priority' basis, each of the sections being broken down as necessary into smaller

Footnote

¹ For his efforts in this project and many other bushland conservation projects in Perth's northern suburbs, David Pike received the 1995 John Tonkin Individual Endeavour Award from Greening Western Australia.