

# Bulbil *Watsonia* (*Watsonia meriana* var. *Bulbillifera*)



Dense infestation of Bulbil Watsonia

Image credit: Kate Blood

**Bulbil Watsonia is a winter-growing bulb. It is widely established in roadsides, degraded native vegetation and wasteland in the Mount Lofty Ranges.**

**Bulbil Watsonia is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.**

## Description

Bulbil Watsonia is an erect herb that produces dense stands of light green, sword-shaped leaves. The leaves are generally less than 1 m long and 5 cm wide. They are produced from a central corm in winter and die off in late summer and autumn, or earlier in dry years.

Flowering stems appear in spring and are slender, reddish and usually less than 2 m tall. Flowers form in spring and early summer and are orange to red, tubular and 5 to 8 cm long. Flowers rarely produce fruit in Australia.

Reproduction is clonal. Cormils are small, shiny red-brown reproductive buds that develop in clusters at the base of the leaves. The cormils are scattered when the leaves die and each one can form a new plant. The corms from which existing plants grow also divide and can create two to three new plants each year.

## Impacts

Bulbil Watsonia is an aggressive weed of native vegetation. In native woodlands and along watercourses bulbil watsonia can form continuous clonal stands that exclude other ground-layer species. The plant also invades roadsides, wasteland and unimproved pasture in high rainfall and waterlogged areas.

Bulbil Watsonia only encroaches into pastures that have been ungrazed for extended periods. It is suspected of being poisonous, but stock avoid mature plants and are apparently unaffected by young shoots.

Corms and cormils generally survive fire and prolific flowering and cormil set can follow summer fire.

## Distribution

Bulbil Watsonia is a native of South Africa and was introduced to Australia as an ornamental garden plant.

It is widespread in the Mount Lofty Ranges, particularly in the higher rainfall areas.

It grows well on light or heavy, mildly acid to mildly alkaline soils and tolerates moderate waterlogging in winter.



Watsonia flower heads  
Image credit: Kate Blood



Watsonia often invades roadsides and railway lines  
Image credit: Kate Blood

## Control methods

Contaminated soil and plant material should be disposed of safely to avoid creating new infestations.

Small infestations in native vegetation can be controlled by spot spraying or wiping foliage with herbicide, although this is labour intensive. The use of selective herbicide on regrowth after fire is effective and reduces impacts to native plant species.

For advice on chemical control techniques contact Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu on (08) 8391 7500 and please refer to the Weed Control Handbook for declared plants in South Australia. You can find it on Biosecurity SA's website at [www.pir.sa.gov.au](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au)

## Declarations

The following sections of the *Landscape SA Act* apply to Bulbil Watsonia in the Hills and Fleurieu region (excluding detached fruit and specific cultivars):

- 186(2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it
- 188(1) Cannot sell the plant
- 188(2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant
- 192(2) Landowner must control the plant on their land
- 194 Regional Landscape Board may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners

## Further information

Further information is available through Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

**Mount Barker Office:** Cnr Mann & Walker streets, Mount Barker, 5251 (08) 8391 7500

**Email:** [hf.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:hf.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)



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