

Remote thorny lignum

E n d a n g e r e d F l o r a o f W e s t e r n A u s t r a l i a

If you think you have seen this plant, please call the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Katanning District on (08) 9821 1296.

Commonly known as remote thorny lignum, *Muehlenbeckia horrida* subsp. *abdita* is an upright to spreading, divaricate and intricately branched shrub, which grows up to 125cm high. New branchlets are dull bluish grey with stems turning reddish brown when semi-mature to grey and fissured when mature. Leaves are small (five to 25mm long), glossy, dark green and are sometimes tinged with red. Small pale yellow flowers, about 4mm across, with five small petals are produced between July and October.

Muehlenbeckia horrida was considered to be restricted to inland south-eastern Australia. However, in 1973, it was collected by K. Newbey, from wetlands near Newdegate in Western Australia and split into two subspecies. The Western Australian taxon was named *abdita* after the Latin *abditus* meaning secret or hidden. Remote thorny lignum was declared as Rare Flora in October 1999.

Muehlenbeckia horrida subsp. *abdita* is endemic to Western Australia where it is restricted to three locations (two live populations) south-west of Newdegate. The subspecies grows in clay and silt depressions. The community it grows in was ranked as Critically Endangered in November 1998. This shrub-dominated community, dominated by *M. horrida* subsp. *abdita* and *Tecticornia verrucosa*, is characterised by occasional flooding and sometimes holds water for several consecutive years. The major components of the community and other biota depend on relatively fresh water and regular drying out of the wetland bed for survival.

As there are only two known remaining populations of remote thorny lignum, CALM is keen to know of any new discoveries. If you are unable to contact the Katanning District office on the above number, please phone CALM's Wildlife Branch on (08) 9334 0422.

The main threats to the species are increased salinity and inundation, recreational activities and poor recruitment.



Flower buds and young, dull bluish grey branchlets. Photo – Natalie Nicholson



Mature plant with reddish flower buds in late July. Photo – Natalie Nicholson

Recovery of a Species



CALM is committed to ensuring that Critically Endangered flora does not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outlines the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of threatened taxa in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by CALM and implemented by regional or district recovery teams consisting of representatives from CALM, community groups, private landowners, local shires and various government organisations.

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Recovery actions

The Katanning District Threatened Flora Recovery Team, in liaison with the Lake Bryde Recovery Catchment Team, is coordinating recovery actions that address the greatest threats to the survival of this species in the wild.

Recovery actions that have been recommended and will be progressively implemented to protect the species, include:

- regular monitoring of known populations;
- researching the biology and ecology of the species;
- conducting further surveys;
- promoting awareness of the species;
- collecting and storing seed and cuttings to establish a living collection at the Botanic Garden and Parks Authority; and
- developing and implementing abatement strategies for salinity and waterlogging through the Lake Bryde Recovery Catchment Team.



Close up of the small pale yellow flowers of the remote thorny lignum.
Photo – Natalie Nicholson



Mature plant in flower during August. Photo – Natalie Nicholson

IRPs will be deemed a success if the number of individuals within the population and/or the number of populations have increased by 10 per cent.



Muehlenbeckia horrida subsp. *abdita* growing in association with *Tecticornia verrucosa*. Photo – Natalie Nicholson