

Matted Flax-lily

Dianella amoena

A Nationally Threatened Species of the Grassland Community

Description

Matted Flax-lily (*Dianella amoena*) is a tufted matt-forming perennial lily. These loose mats can be up to 5 m wide, making it difficult to distinguish individual plants.

The leaves are grey-green, narrow and linear, tapering to 43 cm long by 4-12 mm wide. Leaf blades, sheaths and midribs have small, irregularly-spaced teeth. Many plants have a distinct red colouration at the base. During dry periods over summer the leaves will often become deciduous.

Flower stems are arching 20 to 90 cm long. The flowers are large, star-shaped, nodding and sweetly fragrant. Petals are pale to deep blue-violet and bend backwards towards the stem. Each flower has six stamens with bright orange strumae before the anther; the anther is lime-yellow. When pollinated, the flowers become 7 mm round purple berries. Flowering occurs from October to April. Ripe seeds are black and shiny.



Distribution & habitat

The natural distribution of Matted Flax-lily was recorded from Victoria and Tasmania, but the plant is now considered extinct in Tasmania. It's distribution in Victoria ranges from the Gippsland Plains to Latrobe Valley across Melbourne to the Western Plains, through Central Victoria and over to the Grampians. The dominant vegetation type varies across these sites; however at all sites grasses, both exotic and native, dominate the field layer.



Source: Flora Information System, DSE 2004



Matted Flax-lily (*Dianella amoena*)

Habitat

This plant is known to occur in lowland grasslands, grassy woodlands and grassy wetlands. It ranges from well drained to seasonally wet soils.

Conservation status

Matted Flax-lily is listed as 'Endangered' under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act 1999*.

Similar species

Matted Flax-lily is similar to many other related Flax-lily's such as Black-anther Flax-lily and Plains Flax-lily. The differing features of Flax-lily's can be seen in the leaf size and colour and the height of the flowering stems.

Decline and threats

Like many other species in our landscape, the habitat of Matted Flax-lily has become compromised.

- Land clearing and fragmentation of natural remnants has had a significant impact on this species.
- Grazing pressure from both introduced herbivores such as sheep and rabbits.
- The destruction of sites for urban development has meant that today most natural Matted Flax-lily sites are restricted to roadsides and rail reserves.



Ripe berries



Typical grassy habitat at Riddells Creek

Why are threatened species important?

- The sheer diversity of life is of inestimable value - many biologists now believe that ecosystems rich in diversity are more resilient and able to recover more quickly from stresses such as drought or human-induced degradation
- Because of Australia's long isolation from other landmasses, many of our species are found nowhere else
- Conservation of biodiversity is essential to maintaining ecosystem processes such as nutrient cycling, carbon dioxide / oxygen balance and control of pests and diseases, all of which underpin the economic viability and sustainability of our primary industries
- Extinction is forever...

All photography by
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