



DECLARED PLANT

COASTAL TEA-TREE

Leptospermum laevigatum

Coastal tea-tree is a shrub or small tree, native to the east coast of Australia.

Coastal tea-tree is declared under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*. Its sale is prohibited, and control may be enforced in the South East and Kangaroo Island NRM regions.

Other common names: Victorian tea-tree, Australian myrtle, coast tea-tree, tea tree.

Family: *Myrtaceae*.

Synonyms: *Fabricia laevigata*, *Fabricia myrtifolia*.

Origin: eastern Australia. Introduced as an ornamental and amenity tree as it is easily grown and recognised as an Australian plant.

DESCRIPTION

Habit: Shrub or multi-trunked tree 2-5 m tall, with spreading branches and papery brown bark that becomes thick and grey on the trunk.

Leaves: Blue-green or grey-green, obovate, blunt or with a tiny point at the tip, 1-3 cm long, with silky hairs when developing but soon becoming hairless. They smell like eucalyptus when crushed.

Flowers: 1.5-2 cm wide, in pairs on short stalks in the axils of leaves. Petals 5, white, rounded, 5-9 mm long, widely spaced around a green cup-shaped receptacle. Stamens numerous, c. 2 mm long, attached to a red ring around the edge of receptacle.

Flowering time: August to October.

Fruit: A round woody capsule, 7-8 mm diam., tapered into a stalk at the base, opening by 6-11 slits on the domed top.

Seeds: Narrow, chaff-like, brown, c.2.5 mm long.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Coastal tea-tree is often incorrectly assumed to be native to South Australia, and was planted widely last century as an amenity plant on exposed coastal sites. It spreads from plantings into the adjoining native vegetation, particularly after fires. It is an invasive plant outside its natural range in southern Australia, as well as North America and South Africa. Coastal tea-tree is highly flammable and may increase fire risk.



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HOW IT SPREADS

Coastal tea-tree reproduces by seed, which is produced in large quantities and held in capsules on the branches for years until the parent plant is cut, burned or severely droughted. After release the seeds are dispersed by wind, they can also be carried in water, on machinery or vehicles.

HABITAT

Coastal tea-tree invades coastal heaths, dunes and coastal cliffs and occasionally dry sclerophyll forest. It is mainly restricted to near-coastal dunes including those up to 70 km inland in the South East, growing mainly on calcarenite and deep sands with a high pH. It can also occupy laterite and clay soils, if these are not waterlogged or acidic, in areas with at least 400 mm annual rainfall.

DISTRIBUTION

Found on Eyre Peninsula, Northern Lofty, Murraylands, Southern Lofty, Kangaroo Island and the South East regions. Also naturalised in Western Australia.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Plant local native shrubs instead.

Seek control advice if you have coastal tea-tree infestations. Plant local native shrubs.

Weed control information is available at: pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds_and_pest_animals/weeds_in_sa



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact your local Natural Resources Centre for information on controlling declared weeds:

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au

Images: Infestation in coastal vegetation Ben Shepherd DEWNR; Flowers and foliage Stephen Bain via Wikimedia Commons; Fruit Forest & Kim Starr via Wikimedia Commons; Seedlings Natural Resources South East.

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