

DECLARED PLANT

Espartillo

Amelichloa brachychaetum

January 2015

Espartillo is a tussock forming grass with upright stems that has spread to Australia accidentally, possibly as a contaminant in lucerne seed.

It is now declared under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, with enforced destruction, and prohibition on sale and movement, throughout South Australia.

- **Other common names:** puna, puna grass, spear grass
- **Family:** Poaceae
- **Synonyms:** *Achnatherum brachychaetum*, *Jarava brachychaeta*, *Stipa brachychaeta*
- **Origin:** South America (Argentina and Uruguay)
- **May be confused with:** *Amelichloa caudata* - broad kernel espartillo, which is also declared.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Espartillo is an exotic grass that has the ability to naturalise in South Australia, and may be a threat to remnant temperate grasslands and pastures.

- avoided by livestock because of the sharply pointed leaves, except when young
- once established espartillo is difficult to eradicate.
- has low forage value compared to the grasses it displaces.
- can invade grasslands, woodlands, riparian vegetation and open forest





DESCRIPTION

Habit: erect tussock-forming perennial grass 40 cm - 1 m tall. **Leaves:** blades are 8-35 cm long by 2.5 mm wide, rough to touch with a tuft of hairs at the side, and made up of a sheath partially enclosing the stem which enclose a hard seed-head (cleistogene). **Stems:** upright, growing 40-100 cm tall. **Seeds/flowers:** produces two types of seed-heads. The more visible seed-heads are at the top of the plant, and are distinguished by many hairs. The other type of seed is self-pollinated cleistogenes and occur in the upper and lower leaf sheaths. *Flowering time:* Oct - Feb

Note: *A. brachychaeta* is distinguished from *A. caudata* by its yellow-brown seed with style base placed centrally, and the lemma is hairy all over. *A. caudata*'s style base is placed off-centre, and the lemma hairy along the midrib and on the margin¹.

HOW IT SPREADS

Espartillo solely spreads by seed, when the awns attach to animals (stock or wildlife), clothing, vehicles, or are transported by water, contaminated agricultural produce, slashing or mowing.

HABITAT

Invades temperate grasslands, disturbed sites, roadsides, wastelands, overgrazed pastures, non-cultivated areas and near waterways.

DISTRIBUTION

Espartillo is not yet present in South Australia. It is naturalised on the north-western and central-western slopes of New South Wales.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Seek control advice if you have this weed. Beware of bringing new weeds to your property with fodder or stock.

All espartillo images, courtesy of Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California – Davis, Bugwood.org.

For more information

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

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au

Further weed control information is also available at:

www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa

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