



Government
of South Australia

Declared Plant Policy

This policy relates to natural resources management under section 9(1)(d) of the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (the Act), enabling co-ordinated implementation and promotion of sound management programs and practices for the use, development or protection of natural resources of the State. Specifically, this policy provides guidance on the use and management of natural resources relating to the prevention or control of impacts caused by pest species of plants that may have an adverse effect on the environment, primary production or the community, as per object s7(1)(f) of the Act.

tree heath (*Erica arborea*)

Tree heath is a shrub growing up to 5 metres tall with fine sclerophyll foliage that makes it resemble a native plant. It is naturalised from garden escapes in South Australia.

Management Plan for Tree Heath

Outcomes

- Native vegetation protected from degradation by tree heath.

Objectives

- Prevent the spread of tree heath to uninfested areas due to planting.
- Control high priority infestations in the control area according to regional management plans.
- Contain larger and low-priority infestations of tree heath in the control area.

Best Practice Implementation

- Regional landscape boards and Green Adelaide to respond to any reports of sales of tree heath.
- Landscape boards in the active control region and Green Adelaide to delimit infestations and prioritise those that threaten significant native vegetation sites for control action.

Regional Implementation

Refer to regional management plans for further details.

tree heath policy

Region	Actions
Alinytjara Wilurara	Prevent sale
Eyre Peninsula	Prevent sale
Green Adelaide	Manage sites
Hills and Fleurieu	Manage sites
Kangaroo Island	Prevent sale
Limestone Coast	Prevent sale
Murraylands and Riverland	Prevent sale
Northern and Yorke	Prevent sale
South Australian Arid Lands	Prevent sale

Declaration

To implement this policy, tree heath is declared under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* throughout the whole of the State of South Australia. Its movement or transport on a public road by itself or as a contaminant, or sale by itself or as a contaminant, are prohibited. The Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board and Green Adelaide may require land owners to control tree heath plants growing on their land. These authorities are required to control plants on road reserves in their regions, and may recover costs from the adjoining land owners.

Tree heath is declared in category 3 under the Act for the purpose of setting maximum penalties and for other purposes. Any permit to allow its road transport or sale can only be issued by the regional landscape board or Green Adelaide pursuant to section 197.

Under the *Landscape South Australia (General) Regulations 2020*, Regulation 27 specifies the conditions under which a person is exempt from the operation of section 186 and may transport wool, grain or other produce or goods carrying tree heath on public roads. Regulation 28 specifies conditions under which a person is exempt from the operation of section 188(2) and may sell wool, grain or other produce or goods carrying tree heath. Note that certain produce or goods may be excluded from these general movement and sale exemptions by Gazettal Notice of the Chief Executive of the Department for Environment and Water.

The following sections of the Act apply to tree heath throughout each of the regions noted below:

Sections of Act	Region								
	AW	EP	GA	HF	KI	LC	MR	NY	SAAL
186(1) Prohibiting entry to area									
186(2) Prohibiting movement on public roads	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
188(1) Prohibiting sale of the plant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
188(2) Prohibiting sale of contaminated goods	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
190 Requiring notification of presence									
192(1) Land owners to destroy the plant on their properties									
192(2) Land owners to control the plant on their properties			X	X					
194 Recovery of control costs on adjoining road reserves			X	X					

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by 2025, or in the event of a change in one or more regional management plans for tree heath.

Weed Risk

Invasiveness

Tree heath takes 3-4 years to begin producing seed. It has very high seed production, millions annually from a large bush. The seeds are tiny and disperse short distances by gravity, wind, water, slashing or soil movement. Long distance dispersal is mainly dependant on human activity by planting, or accidental transport of soil containing seeds on vehicles and machinery.

Seed germination may occur in autumn or spring. Seedlings are vulnerable to dry conditions and therefore recruitment is episodic. Infestations may begin on road verges, clearings and drainage lines, later extending into adjoining undisturbed native vegetation.

Impacts

Tree heath is competitive in native vegetation, invading gaps and preventing regeneration of other shrubs due to shading and possibly allelopathic effects. It forms dense pure stands that dominate the shrub stratum in native vegetation, and have the potential to alter the composition and diversity of plant communities.

It has no known impacts in agricultural production or human health, but is unpalatable to stock except as seedlings. On roadsides it may require expensive control to maintain sight lines due to the height and density of established plants.

Potential distribution

Tree heath is native to the maquis shrublands of the Mediterranean Basin with a wide range from Madeira to Ethiopia and Greece. It requires well-drained neutral to acidic soil of low nutrient status and a rainfall over 500 mm concentrated in the winter and early spring. It can also grow under shade of moderate tree cover.

Feasibility of Containment

Control costs

Heaths are difficult to manage in native vegetation because they grow among native plants, have high seed production and may form a soil seed bank.

Burning is not recommended as it is likely to favour heaths due to their rapid regrowth. In areas that have been burnt, a follow-up treatment before the seedlings reach flowering size is important.

Hand removal of small heath plants including the root is possible in moist or light soil. Heaths are not specifically listed on herbicide labels; herbicide applied by spray, stem injection or to cut stumps according to available permits can be highly effective.

No biological control agents are available for heaths.

Persistence

Individual tree heath plants live for 50 years or longer. They develop a massive lignotuber at the base, from which new stems will grow rapidly if the top is damaged by fire or slashing.

tree heath policy

Like other heaths, it has a deeply penetrating mycorrhizal root system that enables it to survive hot dry summers.

Current distribution

Infestations of tree heath are currently known in the Mount Lofty Ranges from Pewsey Vale to Mount Compass. It is also naturalised in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

State Level Risk Assessment

Assessment using the Biosecurity SA Weed Risk Management System gave the following comparative weed risk and feasibility of containment scores by land use:

Land use	Weed Risk	Feasibility of control	Response at State Level
Native vegetation	negligible 11	very high 1	monitor

Considerations

Tree heath was introduced as a garden ornamental shrub in colonial times and first recorded as naturalised in 1931. Its wood, known as briar, is imported for making tobacco pipes and knife handles but it is not cultivated for this purpose in Australia.

Risk assessment indicates a management action at State level of monitoring in native vegetation. However, the local weed risk of tree heath is higher in high rainfall areas. In the Hills and Fleurieu region and adjoining areas of Green Adelaide a strategy of site management by enforced control is justified.

Synonymy

Erica arborea L., Sp. Pl. 353 (1753).

Taxonomic synonyms:

Erica elata Hoffmanns. & Link, Fl. Portug. 1: 411 (1813).

Erica procera Salisb., Trans. Linn. Soc. London 6: 328 (1802).

Erica scoparia Thunb., Diss. Eric. 48 (1785).

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Minister for Environment and Water

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