

Don't let them get away!

Invasive weeds are most effectively controlled when they and their numbers are small – a little weed control work today will save many dollars and days of work in years to come. Now is the time to take action!

Control that weed!

Where infestations are large, tackle isolated and outlying plants first for instant results and then work towards the core infestation. Where possible, control using manual methods, like hand-pulling or chipping, to reduce the inputs of herbicides into the environment.

Small plants can be hand-pulled if they are not yet flowering. Try not to disturb the soil too much, as this can provide fresh ground for new seedlings to establish. Also, make sure that all roots are removed – Spanish heath can resprout from root fragments.

Larger plants can be removed using a mattock, taking care that all roots are removed. Alternatively, larger plants can be cut at the base, and the stump immediately painted with a glyphosate based herbicide mixed 1:1 with water. **Always read and follow the label**, wear protective equipment and avoid off-target damage during chemical control.

Where infestations are large foliar spraying when the plants are actively growing can also be effective – consult the DPIPWE website for further details (www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/weeds).

Slashing is not a preferred method for control, as it encourages regrowth, however, can be appropriate as a short-term control method to prevent large populations from going to seed. This must be followed up with herbicides or manual control.

Spanish heath is a persistent weed that will resprout from root fragments, and germinate from seeds stored in the soil. Regular, **annual follow-up on control works is essential** to stop this stubborn pest from re-invading.

Do the right thing

Weed waste dumped in bushland or local reserves gives pest plants a leg-up into new areas. Do the right thing, and dispose of your weed waste responsibly.

Weeds are easily spread by contaminated machinery and people – check your clothes, shoes, vehicles and other machinery for soil or plant matter that could be carrying weedy plant seeds.

Get informed

Spanish heath is a significant weed threat for Southern Tasmania. For more information contact your local Council office or call the DPIPWE on 1300 368 550.



spanish heath
Erica lusitanica



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



Also known as
Portuguese heath, Heath

Impacts
Biodiversity, agriculture, roadsides, disused areas

Current distribution in Southern Tasmania
Widespread across the region



weed warning

spanish heath



Background

Hailing from south-west Europe, Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) has become a serious environmental weed of Tasmania. An invader of dry and wet forests, coastal woodlands, grasslands and agricultural areas, it swamps native ecosystems, pushing out native plants and reducing habitat and food opportunities for native animals and impacts on pasture in agricultural areas. Spanish heath is also commonly found along roadsides, hitching its way further afield on passing traffic and road maintenance equipment.

One mature plant can produce millions of tiny seeds each year, which are easily spread by wind, water, animals or on contaminated clothing or equipment. Spanish heath responds vigorously to disturbances such as slashing or fire, and often uses these opportunities to spread into new areas.

Get a positive ID

Spanish heath is a woody shrub that usually grows to between 0.5-2m metres tall. It has bright green, feathery leaves, and puts on masses of bell-shaped pinkish-white flowers over winter and spring. The flowers are usually around 3-5mm long, and produce tiny seeds in spring and summer.

There are also several additional weedy Erica species in Southern Tasmania. If in doubt, collect a sample in a sealed bag and contact your local Council office or a DPI/PWE representative

As an invader of native bush, Spanish heath is often mistaken for a native plant. Conversely, some native plants are occasionally mistaken for Spanish heath. Our indigenous Common heath (*Epacris impressa*) (see inset) is sometimes confused with Spanish heath, as they are often found growing in the same areas.

If you're not sure whether the plant you're confronting is a friend or foe, run your fingers through its foliage. Spanish heath can be easily distinguished from native heaths by its soft, bright green, feathery leaves – native heaths have sharper, more substantial leaves and are often a darker green with parallel veins on the underside of the leaf.

Weed management – it's your responsibility

Many people unwittingly harbour this plant pest on their farms and in their gardens – some even actively grow them, knowing nothing of their weedy ways.

This plant is a declared weed under Tasmania's Weed Management Act 1999. It is your responsibility to control Spanish heath on your land. Failure to remove it from your property could result in legal action. It is also illegal to distribute the plant or its seed in any way, whether as cut flowers, in contaminated feed, on livestock or on dirty equipment.

Selling a declared weed

Despite being a declared weed, Spanish heath may occasionally be found for sale at nurseries and local markets. This is illegal. Please report any such occurrences to the DPI/PWE.

**Weeds are a growing problem.
Act now – Make a plan and make a start!**

Images:

1. Spanish heath's feathery green leaves
2. Buds and flowers