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Wongan poison

E n d a n g e r e d F l o r a o f W e s t e r n A u s t r a l i a

If you think you have seen this plant, please call the Department of Conservation and Land Management's (CALM's) Merredin District office on (08) 9041 2488.

Wongan poison, known scientifically as *Gastrolobium glaucum*, is a compact shrub that grows up to 60 centimetres high and usually has many stems arising from a woody rootstock. The bluish-green, or almost grey leaves, are arranged in whorls of three. They are typically oval shaped, erect, and are flat, thick and rigid, with a very blunt tip bearing a hard prickly point. The orange to red flower appears above the leaves in closely clustered whorls of three. The sepals and flower stalks are densely hairy.

Flowering occurs from August to September.

The species inhabits mixed soil types, predominately sandy to sandy gravels in the Wongan Hills area, and often grows in low shrubland communities including tea tree (*Leptospermum erubescens*), tamma (*Allocasuarina campestris*), acacias, melaleucas and hakeas.

Field observations show that the species resprouts from rootstock from older plants. This makes it difficult to identify the numbers of plants, because one individual tends to have multiple shoots.

Wongan poison is known from four populations, each in close proximity to the township of Wongan Hills. Even though the largest population is in undisturbed vegetation, all the other populations are at disturbed sites. This suggests that the species may be a coloniser.

Due to its rarity and restricted distribution, Wongan poison was declared as Rare Flora in November 1980 and is currently ranked as Endangered under World Conservation Union (IUCN) criteria. Threats include weed invasion, road maintenance and critically small populations.

CALM is developing the Wongan-Ballidu Threatened Flora Management Program, which outlines recovery actions identified for Wongan poison and a range of other species. CALM has also established the Merredin District Threatened Flora Recovery Team, which coordinates recovery actions that address the threats to the survival of these species in the wild.



Wongan poison carries small orange and red flowers on densely hairy stalks in late winter-spring. Photo – Phil Roberts

Recovery actions that have been recommended and will be progressively implemented to protect the species include:

- ongoing liaison with land managers;
- change of land tenure to improve security of populations;
- stimulation of regeneration;
- implementation of further surveys;
- regular monitoring of the health of the populations;
- collection and storage of seeds at CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre;
- maintenance of live plants away from the wild (i.e. in botanical gardens);
- carrying out of weed control as necessary;
- development of a fire management strategy; and
- investigation of the biology and ecology of the species.

Recovery of a Species



CALM is committed to ensuring that Declared Rare Flora does not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP) that outline the recovery actions that are required to urgently address the threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of threatened taxa in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by CALM and implemented by regional or district recovery teams made up of representatives from CALM, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the Department of Agriculture, community groups, private landowners, local shires and other government organisations.

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Wongan poison occurs in low shrubland in the Wongan Hills area. Photo – Nicole Willers

IRPs will be deemed a success if the number of individuals within the population and/or the number of populations have increased by 10 per cent.

This poster was prepared by the Department of Conservation and Land Management.