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Loveable triggerplant

Endangered flora of Western Australia

If you think you've seen this plant, please call the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) Geraldton District on (08) 9921 5955.

Loveable triggerplant (*Stylidium amabile*), occurs in just two populations on road and rail reserve south-east of Morawa in the northern Wheatbelt of Western Australia. Currently just 19 plants are known in the wild.

Stylidium is a genus of over 260 species, most of which occur in Australia. The specific name 'amabile' means 'worthy of love'.

All species of *Stylidium* are known as triggerplants due to their unusual pollination mechanism. During pollination, an insect lands on the flower, triggering the release of the column which spring upwards and hits the insect. This either deposits pollen onto the insect or allows the flower to pick up pollen the insect is already carrying.

When loveable triggerplant was first discovered in 1989, the plants were thought to be a disjunct population of the endangered Wongan Hills triggerplant (*Stylidium coroniforme*), however, DNA and morphological studies have shown it to be a distinct species. Unfortunately, although further surveys have been carried out for loveable triggerplant, no new populations have been discovered.

Loveable triggerplant is a perennial herb that grows to between eight and 15 centimetres high. The leaves are up to six centimetres long and form a compact rosette. The margins and midrib of the leaves are conspicuously



An individual of loveable triggerplant with numerous floral stems and leaves forming a rosette.
Photo – Juliet Wege

white and the leaf tip ends in a prominent sharp point. Loveable triggerplant flowers between September and October and has white and pink flowers on flowering stalks up to 28 centimetres tall.

The species grows high in the landscape on sandy lateritic gravel in remnant sheoak and wattle scrub.

Population numbers of loveable triggerplant have been declining since the plants were first found, due to a lack of new recruitment.



A flower of loveable triggerplant with the 'trigger' released following an insect visit.
Photo – Juliet Wege

Recovery of a species

DEC is committed to ensuring that critically endangered taxa do not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outline the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of the threatened species in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by DEC and implemented by regional or district recovery teams consisting of representatives from DEC, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, community groups, private landowners, local shires and various government organisations.

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Department of Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future



Loveable triggerplant

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



Note the white margins and midribs on the leaves. Photo – Juliet Wege

It is likely that regeneration needs to be stimulated by fire, soil disturbance, or an opening up of the shrub canopy. Further research will be undertaken to determine the appropriate germination trigger.

Loveable triggerplant is currently listed as rare under the Western Australian *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and, due to a small number of extant plants, is ranked as critically endangered.

DEC has set up the Geraldton District Threatened Flora Recovery Team to coordinate recovery actions that address the greatest threats to the survival of the species in the wild.

The main threats to loveable triggerplant are lack of recruitment, inappropriate disturbance regimes, accidental destruction and grazing.

The species is known from two populations and DEC is keen to know of any others. The species becomes desiccated over summer so the best time to see it is during the spring flowering period.

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

- installation of rare flora markers to ensure rail and road workers in the vicinity of the plants are aware of the species and its significance;
- fencing of both populations;
- liaison with land managers to ensure works in the area do not impact on the populations;
- investigation into the ecology and biology of the species, in particular germination triggers;
- development and implementation of a fire and disturbance management strategy to assist in ensuring disturbance occurs at appropriate frequencies;
- feral animal control;
- regular monitoring of the health of the populations;
- collection and storage of seed; and
- surveys for new populations.

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

This project is funded by the Australian and State governments' investment through the Natural Heritage Trust, administered in the Midwest Region by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council.

If you are unable to contact the District Office, please phone DEC's Species and Communities Branch on (08) 9334 0455.