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THE PEPPER TREE, *SCHINUS MOLLE* (ANACARDIACEAE) : A POSSIBLE
PROBLEM WOODY WEED IN PINE PLANTATIONS

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Schinus molle L. var *areira* (L.) DC. (often quoted as *S. areira*) a quick growing and drought tolerant tree from Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and N. Argentina has been widely planted in Australia as a street tree or for shade and shelter on farms and pastoral properties. Once established the tree will persist long after the surrounding buildings have vanished (examples of this can be noted on the abandoned towns on the Nullarbor).

This species is naturalized in warm temperate regions of Australia, in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, but in the drier areas of Western Australia it normally does not spread from the original plantings. However, in the wetter temperate regions this is not always the case. Recently the author located a large and spreading population in a pine plantation 5 km SW of Wellington Mills. This plantation was planted on an old farm, which had used *S. molle* around the house for shade. These trees were left in a clearing to provide a picnic site.

Large numbers of young *S. molle* are now established in the valley behind this clearing under the pines (probably spread via birds feeding on the small succulent fruits of this species). These trees are now seeding themselves and numerous seedlings can be located under and around the stand.

Since *S. molle*, once established competes strongly for nutrients and moisture over a wide area, removal of this species from farm land to be converted to pines would be a wise precaution.