

Watsonia – Weed of the Year

1998 'Weed of the Year' in WA is Watsonia.

“Southern Africa has about 70 species of Watsonia (all species pest plants), and so far six, all garden escapes, have been recorded as naturalised in Western Australia. All arise from corms, and form clumps of stiff, sword-shaped upright leaves. Most spread by seeds and corms. Since they are of garden origin, it is often difficult to place them into exact species. *W. bulbifera* (bulbil watsonia) has dull orange flowers in late spring. It is considered by some authors to be merely a horticultural form of *W. meriana*, but it is easily distinguished when in fruit, as it forms many small corms at each

node up the flowering stalk, and these spread it very efficiently along rivers, wetlands and roadside table drains. It is a very serious weed in the wetter south-west and south coast. *W. marginata* has open, pale lilac flowers. It occurs around old settlements from the Darling Range near Perth to Albany. *W. meriana* typically has



dull orange flowers, but it may also be white, pink, or cerise. It is very similar to bulbil watsonia, but apart from not producing bulbils, it also tends to grow in sites where the soil dries out in summer, for example, around granite rocks, and in wandoo woodlands. A serious environmental weed, it is found between Perth and Albany. *W. versfeldii* is a tall, showy plant, with white, pink, cerise or red flowers. It is a serious weed of roadsides and granite rocks between Perth and Albany. Hybrids of *W. borbonica* can be found around Perth. They have open flowers in a variety of pinks and white.”

Ref: “Western Weeds” (Hussey et al, 1997).