

WEED ALERT

WATCH OUT FOR DOLICHOS PEA!

DOLICHOS PEA (*Dipogon lignosus*) is a rampant twining perennial which, if it gets out of control, can become seriously weedy in bushland, smothering other plants and dominating an area.

The plant, which is originally from South Africa, has a strong taproot from which arise twining stems bearing leaves with three triangular leaflets. In spring it is very colourful, producing numerous sprays of pink, white or purple flowers. It sets abundant seed which germinates easily. Many seed-eating birds are attracted to the seed, and it is possible that they may be spreading it in their droppings.

Removal is difficult because cut roots resprout and there will be a huge seed bank dormant in the soil. 'Southern Weeds' suggests using herbicides to reduce the infestation to levels that can be controlled by manual removal, though care has to be taken to avoid non-target plants.



Dolichos Pea has, so far, mostly been a problem in coastal areas or disturbed river banks near settlements, but Jennifer Young sent us this photo, taken in the Porungorup National Park, showing just what the plant can do if it gets established, and suggesting that *LFWers* might like to consider removing it from their gardens. There are several natives that could replace it— see "Southern Plants for Southern Gardens" in the 'New Books' section.

(For colour photos see 'Western Weeds' p 150 or 'Southern Weeds' p 130, herbicide detail on p131.)