

Gyrostemon thesioides



Scanned image by Eve Lazarus

FAMILY: GYROSTEMONACEAE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Gyrostemon thesioides*
(Hook.f.) A.S.George, *Fl. Australia* 8: 392 (1982)

COMMON NAME: Broom wheelfruit

COMMONWEALTH STATUS (EPBC Act): Not Listed

TASMANIAN STATUS (TSP Act): rare

Description

Gyrostemon thesioides is small shrub or undershrub, 30 to 80 cm high. Its stems are hard and woody at the base, with many erect slender angular branches, simple or sparingly branched. Leaves are narrow linear-lanceolate, entire, 1 to 7 cm long; the lower leaves have short stalks, while the upper leaves are smaller and sessile. The species is dioecious, that is, male and female flowers occur on separate plants. Flowers are very small, are solitary in the axils of the upper leaves, and may occur at any time of year. Perianth c. 1 mm long, deeply and unevenly 4-lobed. Male flowers are usually turned to one side and nodding: they have 7 to 10 sessile anthers arranged in a single whorl. Female flowers have 2 orbicular carpels which are flattened and joined along their inner edges, each carpel containing a solitary ovule. The fruit is dry, c. 2 mm long and 4 mm broad, and dehiscent. Seeds are kidney-shaped, c. 2 mm long, reddish-brown, with a short white aril. (Description from Curtis 1967 and Harden 2000) **Confusing species:** *Gyrostemon thesioides* bears a superficial resemblance to some of the exotic brooms, eg, *Cytisus scoparius*, but may be readily distinguished by its flower and fruit.

Distribution and Habitat

On mainland Australia *Gyrostemon thesioides* occurs in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia (Harden 2000). In Tasmania the species has been recorded from the central east and also the Furneaux Group of islands. Habitat includes low forest or scrub dominated by *Allocasuarina verticillata* (drooping sheoak), and also woodland dominated by 'half-barked' *Eucalyptus amygdalina* (black peppermint), the underlying geology being mostly Jurassic dolerite on mainland Tasmania and Devonian granite elsewhere. Associated species may include *Kunzea ambigua* (white kunzea) and, for occurrences on dolerite, *Scaevola aemula* (fairy fanflower).

Key Sites and Populations

Deal Island, Flinders Island, Cape Barren Island, Cataract Gorge, Apsley River, Cusicks Hill, Campbells Sugarloaf, Prosser Gorge.

Known Reserves

Buxton River Conservation Area, Douglas-Apsley National Park, Dry Creek East Nature Reserve, Freycinet National Park, Kent Group National Park, Killiecrankie Nature Recreation Area, Patriarchs Conservation Area.



Plates 1 & 2. *Gyrostemon thesioides* above the Apsley River in March 2008, six months after fire (images by Richard Schahinger)

Ecology and Management

Gyrostemon thesioides is a ‘fire-opportunist’ (Harden 2000). Following fire it recruits from a soil-stored seed bank and may reach maturity within a matter of months. In favourable conditions it is capable of dominating the shrub layer over many kilometres, as observed in the past decade in the wake of the Bicheno and Cape Barren Island fires. Plants are believed to be relatively short-lived (less than 10 years), whereas the longevity of the soil-stored seed bank is likely to be in the order of decades.

The main threat to *Gyrostemon thesioides* is loss of habitat through clearance. The species’ transient nature means that its presence may not be detected in ecological surveys, so inadvertent clearance of habitat is a real possibility

Conservation Status Assessment

A re-assessment of the species’ current status of ‘rare’ on the TSP Act may be warranted given the discovery of extensive populations in formal reserves since its original listing in 1995.

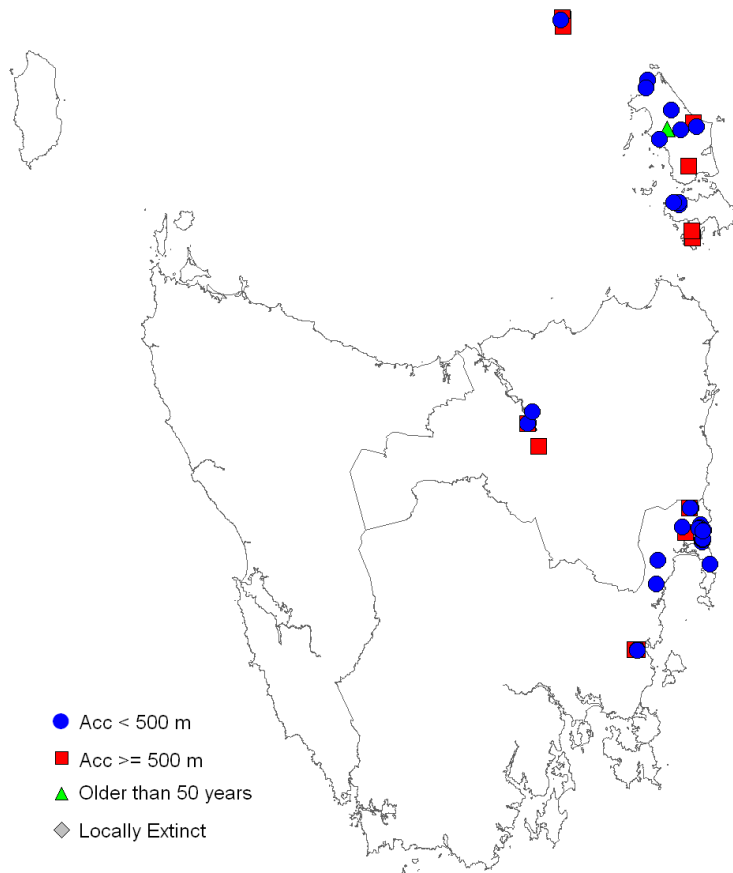
Further Information

Curtis, WM (1967). *The Student’s Flora of Tasmania, Part 3*. Government Printer, Hobart.

Harden, G.J., (2000). *Flora of New South Wales: Revised Edition Volume 1*. University of New South Wales Press Ltd, Sydney.

Tasmanian Distribution

(As per Threatened Species and Marine Section records, April 2014)



1:25 000 Map Sheets

Anderson, Apslawn, Coles Bay, Friendly, Henry, Launceston, Leventhorpe, Lodi, Logan, Longford, Memana, Orford, Palana, Patriarchs, Preservation, Swansea, Tooms, Wingaroo.

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View

<http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/threatenedspecieslists>

Contact details

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Permit

It is an offence to collect, disturb, damage or destroy this species unless under permit.