

Asparagus scandens

COMMON NAMES

climbing asparagus

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Slender scrambling or climbing perennial. Tuberous roots. Stems 2-4 m long, green and much branched at the top, thin and wiry. Leaves are flat cladodes (resembling miro), usually in threes at each node, 5-15 mm x 1-1.5 mm. Flowers tiny, whitish, Sep-Dec. Round berry, 8 mm diam, green turning orange-red, Oct-Feb, with 1-2 seeds.

SIMILAR TAXA

Leaf-like cladodes in flat planes separate *A. scandens* from other asparagus species in NZ.

HABITAT

Terrestrial. Found in lowland and coastal forest, shrublands, mature broadleaf/podocarp forests especially those of light to moderate shade, streams, coastal areas, shrublands, epiphytic niches, roadsides, gravel pits/quarries, farm hedges, house gardens and wasteland areas. Can infest unmodified and fully intact forest.

GENUS

Asparagus

FAMILY

Asparagaceae

AUTHORITY

Asparagus scandens Thunb.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September, October, November, December

FRUITING

January, May, August (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

YEAR NATURALISED

1970

ORIGIN

trop & S Africa



Hayward Scenic Reserve, Lower Hutt.
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REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental.

TOLERANCES

Tolerant to heavy shade, but matures and fruits in moderate shade to full light. Wide range of moisture tolerance. Tubers resprout in response to physical damage.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. The flower is hermaphrodite (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Reproduces from seed and vegetatively by the transport of tuberous roots (ibid.). Seed is dispersed by birds; tubers spread by soil movement, garden dumping and human activity (ibid.).

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

asparagus: An old Greek name for this plant possibly derived from a- (an intensifier) and sparasso 'to tear', referring to the prickles of some species

scandens: Climbing; from the Latin scandere; groth habit

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

ASPSCA

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/asparagus-scandens/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026