



INVASIVE PLANT ALERT
Have you seen this plant?

Onion weed, hollow-stem asphodel, pink asphodel or wild onion
Scientific name: *Asphodelus fistulosus*



Environmental Affairs
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Water Affairs



What does it look like?

Asphodelus fistulosus is an annual or short-lived perennial 0.8 m in height. The rhizome is short, vertical; roots are fibrous, yellow. **Leaves are 15–40 mm long, erect, linear, hollow, smooth and sheathing at the base. Flowers are conspicuous, white to pinkish with pinkish brown midribs on the petals.** Seeds are angular, 3–4 mm long, with deep irregular pits, brown to black in colour. Flowering time: Spring (August to October) in South Africa.

Note that *Asphodelus fistulosus* should not be confused with some other species also known by the common name 'onion weed' or 'false garlic', for example *Nothoscordum gracile* or *N. borbonicum*. The best way to tell *A. fistulosus* apart from other species are the midribs on flower petals and the erect flowers.

Why is it important?

Asphodelus fistulosus is listed in the Global Compendium of Weeds along with seven other species of *Asphodelus*. This plant species has been reported as invasive in the southwestern United States, Australia, India, Spain and New Zealand and is known to be an aggressive invader. In 2011 it was recorded in South Africa for the first time. Only two populations of this plant have been observed in South Africa thus far, both along disturbed roadsides in deep sandy soils on the West Coast. The Early Detection and Rapid Response Programme (EDRR) is taking a precautionary approach and is calling for reports of its presence so we can remove it before it becomes widespread.

How does it spread?

The main method of spread appears to be via seeds that may be dispersed by animals, water, vehicles and other human activities. The seeds can survive in the soil for several years and will germinate readily once moisture and temperature conditions are favourable.

What to do if you see it?

Please report sightings of these plants to the Early Detection and Rapid Response Programme (EDRR) staff at SANBI. Please do not remove any parts of the plant if you find it, as this might promote its further spread. If possible, provide us with a locality description, a photo and a GPS coordinate.



Contact

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Sources: Boatwright 2012; Días Lifante & Valdés 1996; Patterson 1996; Randall 2007; Russel 2008.
FIGURE 1-A1: *Asphodelus fistulosus* flyer.