

Thesium australe



FAMILY: SANTALACEAE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Thesium australe*, R.Br.,
Prodr. 353 (1810)

COMMON NAME: Austral toadflax

COMMONWEALTH STATUS: (*EPBC Act*)
Vulnerable

TASMANIAN STATUS: (*TSP Act*) presumed
extinct

Thesium australe.
Tasmanian Herbarium specimen (mainland).

Description

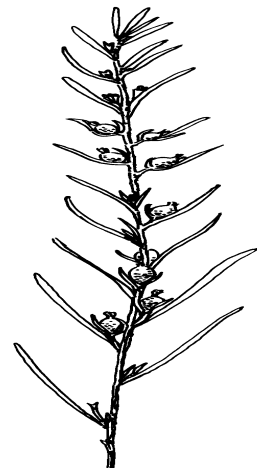
Thesium australe is a short-lived herbaceous shrub with wiry stems up to 30 cm in length. It is parasitic on the roots of other plants, particularly kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*). **Leaves:** The leaves are arranged alternately on the stem and are narrow and linear in shape (between 15-30 mm long). **Flowers:** The flowers have 2 narrow bracts (leaf-like structures) at the base and are solitary or on short stalks that arise from the axils (where the stem meets the leaf). The flowers have both male and female parts and are approximately 2 mm long, cylindrical in shape and greenish-yellow in colour. The flowers are 5 lobed. Flowering is predominantly in spring and summer (Flora of Victoria). **Fruit:** The fruit is an oval or spherical nut that is between 2-2.5 mm long. The nut has 8-10 longitudinal ribs and a network of veins that run over the surface (description from Curtis 1967, Griffith 1991, Leigh *et al.* 1984).

Distribution and Habitat

On the mainland this species occurs in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. In Tasmania, Robert Brown collected one record of *Thesium australe* in 1804 around the Derwent River Valley. Suitable habitat for this species includes grassland and grassy woodland (Curtis 1967, TPLUC 1996).

Key Sites and Populations

Thesium australe is considered to be extinct in Tasmania.



Thesium australe. R. Hale.

Known Reserves

This species is not currently known from any reserve.

Ecology and Management

There is evidence that *Thesium australe* occurred on the limited areas of fertile soil that have now been used for intensive agriculture. Other studies indicate that the species has had a similar fate in Victoria, where decline was attributed to pressures associated with grazing and agricultural practices. In New South Wales, the strong association with kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) was studied and priority was given to areas that contained this grass species (Buchanan 1994).

Information from other states also indicates that numbers fluctuate greatly between seasons. Germination of seed occurs after fire but at other times as well. Animal grazing, trampling and clearing for agriculture are all threats to this species (TPLUC 1996).

Conservation Status Assessment

There is no immediate need for reassessment of *Thesium australe*.

Further Information

- Archer, WR 1983, 'Thesium australe: Field Notes and Observations', *The Victorian Naturalist*, Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, Vol.100.
- Buchanan, A 1994, *A Search for Thesium australe in the Derwent Valley, South Eastern Tasmania*, Parks & Wildlife Tasmania, prepared for the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, Endangered Species Program, Number 223.
- Curtis, WM 1967, *The Student's Flora of Tasmania*, Part 3, Government Printer, Hobart.
- Griffith, SJ 1991, *The Biology and Management of Austral Toadflax (Thesium australe) in New South Wales*, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Unit.
- Kirkpatrick, JB, Gilfedder L & Fensham RJ 1988, *City Parks and Cemeteries: Tasmania's Remnant Grasslands and Grassy Woodlands*, Tasmanian Conservation Trust, Hobart.
- Leigh J, Boden, R & Briggs, J 1984, *Extinct and Endangered Plants of Australia*, Macmillan, Melbourne.
- Tasmanian Public Land Use Commission 1996, *Environment & Heritage Report Vol IV, Background Report*, Part C, Tasmanian Commonwealth Regional Forest Agreement, Hobart.

Tasmanian Distribution

There is no distribution information available for *Thesium australe*.

Date last modified: 03/09/03