

Hook-point poison

Endangered flora of Western Australia

If you think you've seen this plant, please call the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) Moora District on (08) 9652 1911 or the Avon-Mortlock District on (08) 9622 8940.

Commonly known as hook-point poison, *Gastrolobium hamulosum* is a small, erect, somewhat straggly shrub, to 45 centimetres tall. The numerous slender branchlets are covered with conspicuous short, white hairs. Bluish-green leaves have conspicuous net veins and the midrib is raised beneath. The oval shaped leaves have a wide, blunt tip that has a characteristic hooked point. The leaves are arranged in whorls of three up the stems. Golden yellow flowers, streaked with red, are arranged in short clusters at the ends of the branches. The calyx has long silky hairs and deeply divided lobes which taper to long points. Hook-point poison flowers between August and October.

James Drummond first collected hook-point poison in 1864 from an unknown location in Western Australia. The first collection of hook-point poison from a known location was made in 1923 by H.L. Wade from near Calingiri. Several additional collections have since been made from near Watheroo, Carani, Calingiri, east of New Norcia, near Bindi Bindi and at Wongan Hills. The New Norcia and Carani populations have not been relocated recently and are now only known from herbarium specimens.

Habitat is pale yellowish clay loam with some sand and gravel on clay flats, or white and grey sand or sandy clay, sometimes in disturbed ground with other colonising shrubs such as *Baeckea crispifolia*, *Gastrolobium*



Yellow and red pea flowers of hook-point poison. Photo – Andrew Brown

calycinum (York Road poison) and *Mirbelia spinosa*, or in low heath with *Allocasuarina campestris*, melaleucas, eucalypts and tall sedges. It has also been recorded from quartzite ridges.

Hook-point poison is only known from six populations that contain a total of around 140 adult plants and less than 100 seedlings. With continuing

decline in the condition of the habitat, it was declared to be rare flora in June 1990 and ranked in December 1997 as critically endangered. The main threats are road, rail and drain maintenance activities, weed invasion, inappropriate fire regimes and possibly dieback disease caused by the plant pathogen *Phytophthora* spp.

DEC has set up the Moora and Avon-Mortlock districts threatened flora recovery teams to coordinate recovery actions that address the greatest threats to the survival of the species in the wild (see overleaf).

Hook-point poison is currently known from six populations and DEC is keen to know of any others.

If unable to contact the district offices on the above numbers, please phone DEC's Species and Communities Branch on (08) 9334 0455.

Recovery of a species

DEC is committed to ensuring that critically endangered taxa do not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outline the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of the threatened species in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by DEC and implemented by regional or district recovery teams consisting of representatives from DEC, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, community groups, private landowners, local shires and various government organisations.



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Top: Flowers of the hook-point poison.
Photo – DEC

Above: Hook-point poison in full flower.
Photo – Eleanor Bennet



Hook-point poison on a road reserve north of Watheroo. Photo – Val English

Recovery actions that have been, and will be, progressively implemented to protect the species include:

Protection from current threats: installing rare flora markers to mark populations on road and rail reserves; weed control; conducting further surveys; and regular monitoring of the health of the populations.

Protection from future threats: development of both a translocation proposal and a fire management strategy; collection and storage of

seed at DEC's Threatened Flora Seed Centre; maintenance of live plants away from the wild (i.e. in botanic gardens); stimulating germination of seedlings in the wild using smoke water, burning or other methods; monitoring the impact of dieback disease; providing information about the importance of the species to the community; and researching the biology and ecology of the species. Other actions include ensuring that relevant authorities, landowners and DEC staff are aware of the species' presence and the need to protect it, and that all are familiar with the threats identified in the Interim Recovery Plan.

IRPs will be deemed a success if the number of individuals within the population and/or the number of populations have increased.

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