

## Environmental Weed Alert.



### **Asparagus Fern** *Protoasparagus aethiopicus*

**Description:** Asparagus fern was introduced originally from South Africa as an ornamental plant in gardens and hanging baskets. In the past it has been a garden escapee invading coastal rainforest areas, other gardens, roadsides and prefers sandy soils. Its scrambling capability and dangerous spines situated within the foliage continue to make it a threatening weed by smothering low growing native plants and suppressing native regeneration possibilities. Asparagus fern has bright green, almost needle like leaflets with many branched stems up to 2m long. The leaves (up to 2.5cm long) can be single or in clusters and contain a distinct midrib and abrupt point. It has small, bell shaped, white to pale pink flowers to 0.5cm and its fruit is a pale green berry maturing to bright red in winter. Asparagus fern is very noticeable when displaying its bright red berries. Birds and humans continue to spread this weed. Some attractive native alternatives to this weed include Basket Grass (*Oplismenus imbecillis*), Blue Flax Lily (*Dianella caerulea*), Mat Rush (*Lomandra hystrix*), Native Violet (*Viola hederacea*) and Ground Fern (*Hypolepsis muelleri*).

**Control:** Small infestations should have the berries removed so birds cannot spread them further afield. Place the berries in a bag and in the bin. The foliage should also be removed and the crowns and roots levered out of the soil. They are able to form dense mats of tuberous roots, so be sure to get all of the rhizomes. For larger infestations a registered herbicide spray may be required, Remember to read and adhere to the herbicide label and instructions. Repeat treatments will be required.