



Native plant profile

Cassytha glabella

slender dodder-laurel (or slender snotty-gobble).

The dodder-laurels are sometimes referred to as snotty-gobbles (what a fabulous name!).

They are twining parasitic native plants that play an important role in our native ecosystems.

It is probably better to refer to them as snotty-gobble to avoid confusion with a serious agricultural pest; the introduced golden dodder (*Cuscuta campestris*).

These two plants are not even closely related. They are in different families. *Cassytha* species are more closely related to avocado and cinnamon than to golden dodder.

How to recognise it

Slender snotty-gobble is a rootless twining perennial parasite.

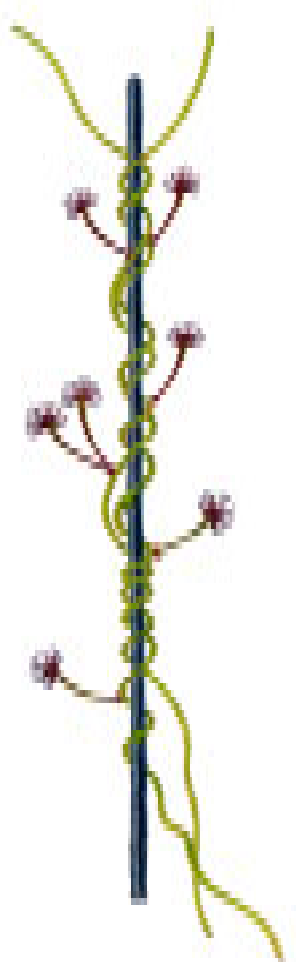
The stems are a yellow-green colour and usually less than 1mm thick.

The flowers are very small and held on a stalk in a cluster of up to ten.

The fruits are roughly oval in shape and up to 10mm long.

Ecological importance

Slender snotty-gobble is found widely throughout Australia and I would expect it on many Bush For Life sites.



Slender snotty-gobble. Drawing courtesy of State Herbarium of SA, "Flora of SA".



L to R: *Candalides acastus*, female and male - native butterflies which rely on the slender snotty-gobbles. Pictures courtesy of R Fisher "Butterflies of SA".

It can be a parasite on a wide range of other plants. Many parasites, like mistletoes, will only parasitise one type of plant.

People wrongly believe that this plant is a problem that should be removed from native shrubs under stress.

One of the most difficult lessons for anybody to understand is that in the natural environment **nothing** occurs in isolation.

If we were to remove snotty-gobbles we would be threatening the existence of at least two of our native butterflies; *Candalides acastus* (blotched blue) and *Candalides hyacinthinus simplex* (western dusky blue).

The caterpillars of these butterflies rely solely on snotty-gobble species. If we dramatically reduced the food source we could be directly responsible for the local extinction of two species.

This would not be the end of the tragedy. Several bird species also use these plants as a food source. They eat the fruits. Therefore we would also have a negative impact on these bird species.

There are probably other interactions happening with this plant that we know nothing about.

Sometimes snotty gobble can completely over-run large shrubs. We have to remember that nature is taking its course.

Perhaps nature is in the process of removing genetically less robust versions of the shrub.

Threats

The biggest threat to slender snotty-gobble would have to be well meaning humans trying to help another plant.

It is a valuable part of the last patches of our remnant bushland.

You can help protect this plant by telling people how important it is for at least two of our native butterflies and several of our native birds.

It may not be the nicest or prettiest of plants, but then nature is not about beauty competitions.

Peter Tucker

Weed profile

Cotoneaster species

Cotoneaster.

There are many different types of cotoneaster. In all there are 70 species that occur naturally from Europe to Asia.

Over time a few of these have become favoured garden plants.

They are usually grown because they have bright red berries.

Cotoneasters are in the Rosaceae family, which is known to contain many invasive species.

A typically invasive plant

I have been noticing more and more of these plants in remnant bushland over a wide area.

I have seen them in Millicent, Port Lincoln and Para Wirra to name just three.

Cotoneasters are already a major concern in some National Parks in Victoria and New South Wales.

Carried far and wide by our feathered friends

The brightly coloured berries are eaten by a number of birds.

The birds may then carry the seed for several kilometres and deposit them into our remnant vegetation - and a weed is born.

But what does it look like?

The shrubs have an upright appearance and are evergreen.

The leaves and twigs often have many small hairs on them.

The younger branches have many more hairs to the point of almost being woolly.

Cotoneasters produce clusters of bright red berries, which makes them highly distinctive.

If one is found on your Bush For Life site

If you think you have discovered this plant on your Bush For Life site it is necessary to have it confirmed as cotoneaster.

Your Regional Co-ordinator can help you with this, or you could simply take a small cutting of the plant to your local nursery for identification.

Once confirmed, it is simple to remove. Cut the plant close to ground

and swab with concentrated Glyphosate™.

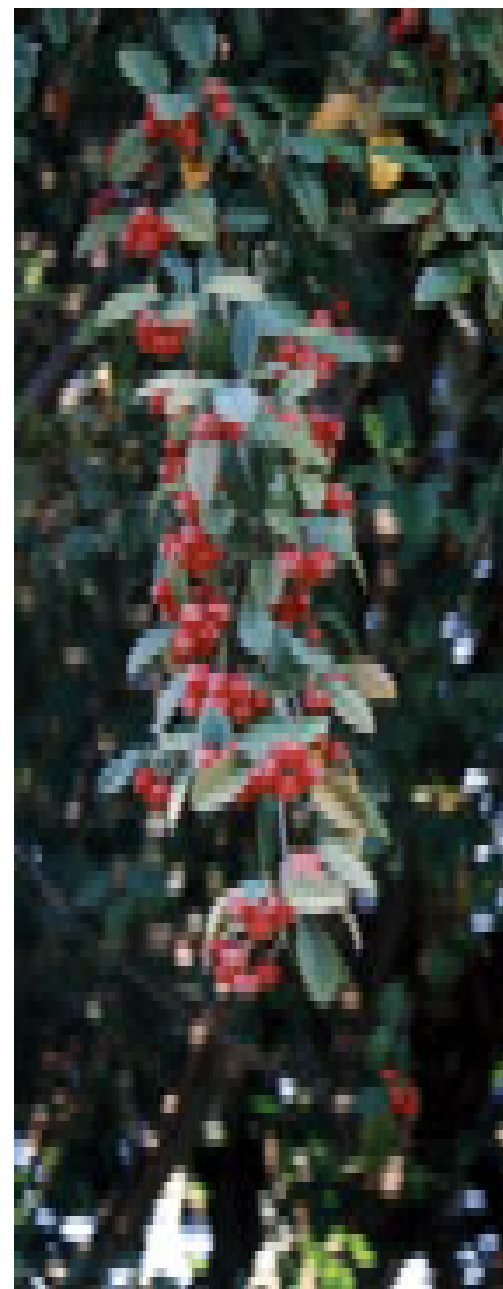
You may find it beneficial to rough up any exposed bark and paint it with Glyphosate™ as well.

Seedlings can be removed by hand, but make sure to minimise any soil disturbance.

You have probably noticed that this is much easier when the soil is moist.

I would recommend checking the surrounding area and roadsides for any other occurrences of this weed and remove these too.

Don't forget to take a sample for your herbarium.



Garden plant bushland weed

I would like to encourage anybody who lives near remnant vegetation to check their garden for **any** berry producing plants.

If you find some (and if they are not locally indigenous species!!) please consider if it is really necessary to have them in your garden.

What a fabulous opportunity to give your garden a makeover.

You may even consider replacing them with local species.

Peter Tucker



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