



South African daisy; to weed or not to weed Or The case of the wuzzly, wascally, winged weed

The *Senecio* genus comprises several native species, but also includes a common bushland weed; *Senecio pterophorus* (South African daisy).

The species name is pronounced tero-for-us and, as explained to me by Pat Clark (one of our Regional Coordinators), it is easy to remember because this weed is a terror for us (and our bushland).

It is highly important that we do not confuse it with the many native *Senecio* species.

A number of carers have requested that we write an article about South African daisy in order to reduce the confusion when it is found on or near their Bush For Life site.

(And for those of you confused about the term 'wuzzle', Peter assures me it means to jumble or mix up, and comes from Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary he has at home, originally published in 1901. Ed).

You have probably already come to the conclusion that this weed comes from South Africa.

Areas of South Australia and South Africa have similar climatic conditions, which enables this weed to thrive in South Australia.

leaves usually have small lobes on the edges.

The most important identifying feature is the way the leaf blade continues down the stem of the plant.

This continuation of the leaf is often referred to as a "wing", which helps us to remember: if it is a *Senecio* and has WINGS it is a WEED.

The native varieties

It is very important that this plant is not confused with native *Senecio* species.

There are several species which could be confused with South African daisy.

The photographs compare just three of them to the weed.

The native hills daisy, *Ixodia achillaeoides*, also has wings but its flowers are white not yellow.

Many of the native *Senecio* species occupy the same type of habitat, some have similar types of leaves, flowers and even their growth habits look similar.

Like South African daisy many are natural colonisers and can easily be found after disturbance, especially after fire.

However, none of the native *Senecios* have wings extending down the stem, and the hills daisy has white flowers.

As with most weeds, South African daisy has an ecological advantage because it exists here without its natural checks and balances.

Cross breeding in the bush

The problem with this weed is it doesn't just stop with displacing our native plants, it will readily cross breed (hybridise) with some of our native

Senecio species. This can have grave implications for the unique genetic material contained in the native species.

Not only does it impact on species diversity but it can also impact on the genetic diversity of a patch of bushland.

Genetic diversity is one of the components of biological diversity that

is very difficult to visualise because it occurs at a molecular level.

It is genetic diversity within a species that enables it to adapt to naturally changing environmental conditions over hundreds of years.

Ridding your site of South African daisy

Removal techniques are the same as for many types of weed.

Start in the best area of bushland and slowly work your way toward the worst affected area.

South African daisy can be hand pulled when it is small and the soil is moist. Be careful to minimise disturbance to the soil.

Larger specimens can be cut and swabbed with concentrated Glyphosate™.

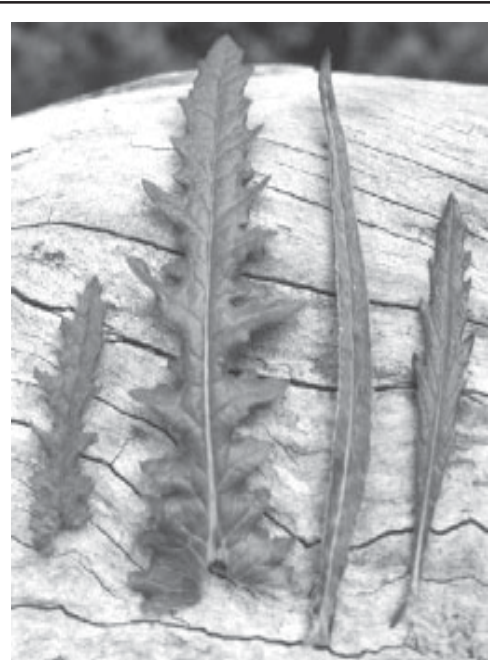
Remember, don't confuse it with the natives. If you are unsure of its identification, check with your Regional Co-ordinator.

Do not remove a plant you cannot identify.

If it is a weed it will still be there when you return.



Senecio pterophorus, Stop Bushland Weeds 1997, Meg Robertson, Nature Conservation Society of SA.



Leaf surfaces



Underneath of leaves

Photos of *Senecio* leaf surfaces and underneath features.

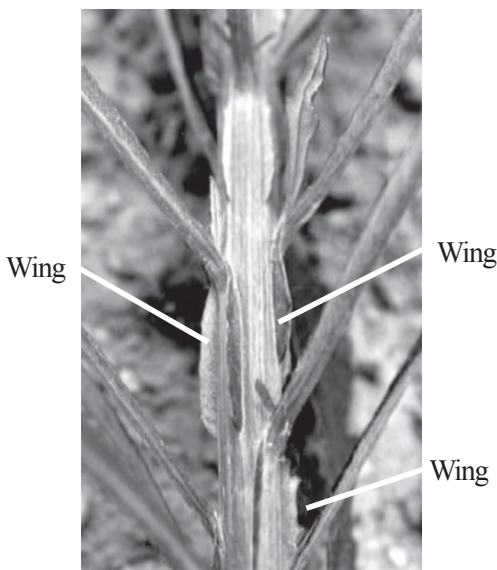
Left to right:
Leaf on the left is *Senecio picridioides*; it will have a purple tinge beneath the leaf.

The second is *Senecio hispidulus*, paler below than above.

The third leaf is *Senecio tenuiflorus*; it has some hairs on the top surface and lots underneath the leaf, it looks woolly underneath (*Senecio quadridentatus* can look very similar – not shown).

The fourth leaf is from the WEED, *Senecio pterophorus*.

Remember don't just use leaf shape, if your *Senecio* plant has WINGS down the stem it is a WEED.



A closer look at the weed

South African daisy is a perennial plant that can reach heights of over 2m, but is usually less than 1.5m tall.

The taller plants can become quite woody. The top of the leaves are a dark shiny green while the underside appears white and woolly, and the

Peter Tucker

