

# Trailing Hop-bush

*Dodonaea procumbens*

Photo: Terri Williams

A Nationally Threatened Species of the Grassy Woodland and Heathy Dry Forest Communities

## Description

Trailing Hop-bush (*Dodonaea procumbens*) is a creeping (prostrate) shrub, to 1.5 m diameter and rarely exceeding 20 cm tall.

Its leaves are wedge-shaped, usually shiny green and often with 1-4 teeth, 8-30 mm long and 4-9 mm wide. They are leathery and sticky to touch and may be hairless or covered in small, soft erect hairs.

## Habitat

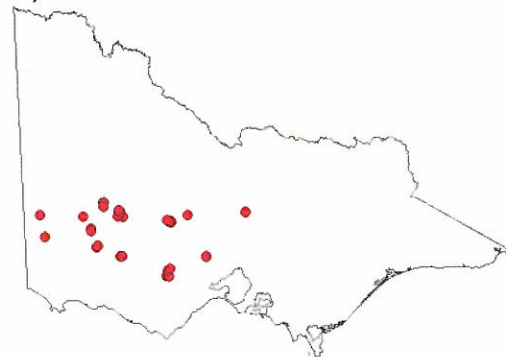
Trailing Hop-bush grows in low-lying, often winter-wet areas in woodlands, low open forests and grasslands on sands and clays. Populations have been recorded in various plant communities, including grassy woodland dominated by River Red-gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) in western Victoria, heathy dry forest in Central Victoria and in wet heath in far-western Victoria.



A small Trailing Hop-bush plant. Photo: Jenni Thomas

## Distribution

Trailing Hop-bush occurs in scattered populations across south-eastern Australia in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. Populations in Victoria are largely confined to the south-west (Penola-Dergholm area, Grampians, Lake Fyans) with disjunct occurrences near Castlemaine, Avoca, Skipton, Camperdown, Bacchus Marsh and Seymour.



Source: Flora Information System, DSE 2006



Trailing Hop-bush fruit. Photo: Jenni Thomas

# Trailing Hop-bush (*Dodonaea procumbens*)

## Conservation status

Trailing Hop-bush is listed as Vulnerable under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act).

## Decline and threats

The decline in Trailing Hop-bush is a direct result of habitat loss. To help maintain the current population size of the species it is best to avoid broadscale herbicide use and soil disturbance by mechanical intervention.

## Existing conservation methods

Currently, DSE is implementing a range of recovery plan actions for the species. These actions include, but are not limited to:

- Searching for new populations
- Cultivating plants to help increase the population size
- Weed control
- Fencing of known populations to protect them from browsing when needed

## Hybridisation

Sometimes plants will interbreed with closely related species in the same area. Some Hop Bush plants have interbred in the wild. Hybrids usually combine the features of parent plants to produce offspring which may be difficult to distinguish from either parent plant.

The hybrids usually will have a taller appearance, looking more like a medium-sized shrub compared to a low to prostrate shrub.

## Similar species

Trailing Hop-bush is similar in appearance to many other *Dodonaea* species such as the Sticky Hop-bush (*Dodonaea viscosa*), which is found in many locations throughout Victoria. However Sticky Hop-bush is much more erect when compared to Trailing Hop-bush.



**Sticky Hop-bush (*Dodonaea viscosa*).**

Photo: Viridans Biological Databases

## Why are threatened species important?

- Ecosystem maintenance - the complex nature of ecosystem relationships means that the removal or disturbance of one part of the ecosystem could affect the functioning of many other components - our knowledge of these relationships is incomplete, so the results of loss or disturbance are unpredictable
- The sheer diversity of life is of inestimable value - many biologist now believe that ecosystems rich in diversity are more resilient and able to recover more quickly from stresses such as drought or human-induced degradation
- Because of our continent's long isolation from other landmasses, many of our species are found nowhere else
- Extinction is forever...



Photo: Jenni Thomas

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