

Desmocladus flexuosus

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TANGLE RUSH

Flowering period: July–October.

Description: Rhizomatous perennial rush often distinctively tufted, with erect 20–40 cm tall culms, each 1–3 mm wide with internodes on lower stem 3–4 cm apart. Branchlets tangled with flowers in terminal spikelets encased in brown bracts with flowers producing extended cream coloured stamens (male plants) or white, feather-like stigmas (female plants). Plant often green; however, may be grey-green or minutely hairy in some coastal forms. Seed a single brown-grey nutlet that ripens in December–January.

Pollination: Wind pollinated with stamens releasing pollen in the early morning around sunrise.

Distribution: Widespread from Kalbarri to Israelite Bay and common in dunes or limestone in the Perth area. Grows in secondary stable dunes where the plant can form dense clumps of stems.

Propagation: A difficult species to propagate from seed. Rhizome division is a slow and labour-intensive method of propagation but is the only known method of propagation. Division method involves growing parent plants in pots and dividing into segments (usually after 6–12 months) containing three culms (lead and two older culms). Continue dividing plants until a suitable number of parent plants are established to enable production for restoration purposes.

Uses in restoration: A difficult species to source for restoration but useful for dune stabilisation by virtue of the extensive, sand-binding roots and ramifying rhizome.

Notes: One of only two members of the restiad or southern rush family (Restionaceae) to occur on the Perth coastline. Research into seed dormancy of the species has shown that seeds do require a period of ageing in soil by which time they respond to applications of aerosol smoke. However, only limited success has been achieved in seed dormancy release under nursery conditions.

Desmocladus asper is very similar to *D. flexuosus*, differing in the distinctly rough culm sections (relatively smooth in *D. flexuosus*). The two species can co-occur in coastal dunes, most commonly on exposed limestone.



Habit



Flowers of *D. asper*



Habit



Distribution