

Exocarpus sparteus

BROOM BALLART

R.Br.

Flowering period: February–October.

Description: Open shrub to small tree to 3 m high with pendulous, usually leafless branches. Flowers produced on swollen 7–15 mm long spikes, with flowers inserted on the spike with each flower dull brownish-green, 1 mm wide. Fruit 1–3 per spike, comprising a 4–6 mm long basal fleshy portion (derived from expansion of the flower stalk or receptacle) that enlarges and becomes red with maturity of the seed. Terminal portion a 4–5 mm long, hard, slightly elongated seed with a shiny outer coat.

Pollination: Open pollinated by a variety of insects.

Distribution: Coastal to inland species, widely distributed. In the Perth region favours near-coastal areas comprising secondary dunes in sand or sand over limestone where the plant often emerges above the height of the coastal heath.

Propagation: Difficult to propagate except with good quality seed sown directly into pots. As the species is partially parasitic (hemiparasite) propagated plants benefit from association with a host species including understory species such as cottontails.

Uses in restoration: A useful species producing red berry-like fruits attractive to some native bird species. The coastal form may include clonal forms resulting in localised clusters of small trees. Plant requires some protection from direct wind such as in lee of dunes or amongst protective vegetation.

Notes: The species produces underground parasitic ‘pads’ that adhere to the surface of the roots of host plants. There is no evidence that broom ballart causes decline or death of parasitised plants. A useful species for increasing the biodiversity values of restored dunes.



Habit



Flower and fruit



Fruit



Distribution