

Through the Sanctuary
with
Robyn Howard

Barbed Wire Vine (*Smilax australis*)



Flowers

Green fruit, above

Leaf formation
below



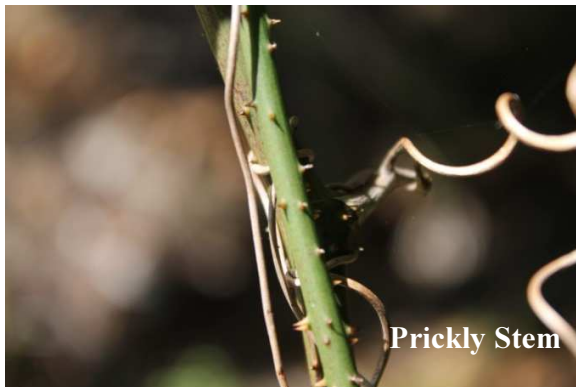
Barbed Wire Vine (*Smilax australis*) is a robust climber readily found within the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary, both in the garden and beside the tracks.



It is easily identified by the shape of its leathery leaves and the three strongly prominent veins with two lesser veins running lengthwise along the leaves. Leaves grow up to 15 cm in length and 10 cm in width. New growth is generally quite pinkish. White flowers appear mostly in spring, but blossoms may appear at other warm times. They are followed by green fruit or berries which turn black when ripe. Tendrils assist climbing or scrambling, stems are

prickly, the thorns becoming more pronounced with age, resulting in its common name. Some vines remain near ground level, some scramble across low shrubbery, while yet others climb high into the canopy. In suitable conditions, Barbed Wire Vine grows so vigorously that it becomes impenetrable.

The preferred habitat is wet sclerophyll forest, but this is a hardy plant which will be found in a variety of situations such as dry sclerophyll, rainforest, woodland and heath. Barbed Wire Vine is NOT salt tolerant, and will therefore not be found in the casuarina or mangrove areas of the sanctuary.



This is an extremely tough plant, able to tolerate periods of dry, but also able to live in constantly moist situations. It is fire tolerant, re-sprouting after burning, with fallen seed able to sustain its viability in soil.

It is the host plant to several butterflies, while fruit is utilised by birds and small native mammals such as the Fawn-footed Melomys and the Bush Rat. The alternative common name for this spikey vine is Native Sarsaparilla.

Robyn Howard