

1. Habit growing along Gap Creek Road in Kenmore Hills. 2. White star-shaped flowers. 3. Bright orange mature fruit. 4. Heart-shaped leaves.



## Dwarf Tamarillo (*Solanum abutiloides*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Dwarf Tamarillo is a member of the Solanaceae plant family native to a small region of South America (i.e. north-western Argentina and Bolivia). This species has does not have any history as a weed overseas, but has become established in south-eastern Queensland and is beginning to spread.

### Distribution

This species was first recorded growing in disturbed woodland on the edge of the Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens in Brisbane in 1985. Several further specimens of this plant were collected growing in the Mount Coot-tha area between 1998 and 2006. However, over the last couple of years there have been concerning reports of it appearing in surrounding suburbs including Toowong, Bardon and Kenmore Hills. For example, it is an emerging weed at the top of the Ithaca Creek catchment.

### Description

Dwarf Tamarillo is a shrub (or rarely a small tree) usually growing 1-3 m tall. Its stems and leaf undersides are densely covered with tiny matted hairs and its alternately arranged leaves are borne on stalks 5-10 cm or more long. These leaves (10-22 cm long and 8-17 cm wide) are heart-shaped in outline with pointed tips and entire margins. Their upper surfaces are usually dark green while their undersides are greenish-white in colour. At the base of each leaf stalk is a pair of small, stalkless, leafy structures 15-30 mm long and 10-30 mm wide.

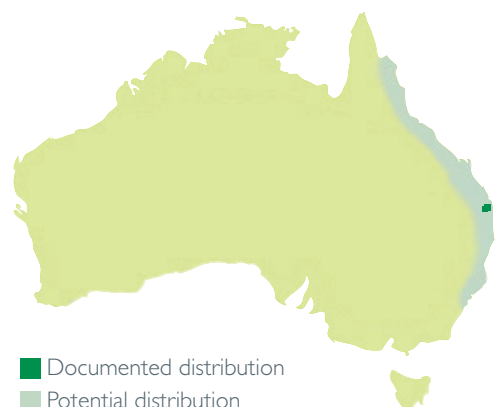
The white flowers are borne in clusters at or near the tips of the branches, with each cluster usually containing about 20 flowers (rarely up to 50). Each flower is about 2 cm across and is borne on a short stalk 5-7 mm long. These star-shaped flowers have five green sepals that are fused together at the base, five partially fused white petals, and five bright yellow stamens. The fruit are borne in an upright position and are usually covered with spreading hairs. These small egg-shaped fruit (about 10 mm long) turn from green to orange in colour as they mature. They contain numerous yellowish-brown seeds, each about 1.5 mm long.

### Quick Facts

- > A shrub usually growing 1-3 m tall
- > Each of the heart-shaped leaves has a pair of small leafy structures at its base
- > Its white star-shaped flowers are usually borne in clusters of about twenty
- > Small egg-shaped fruit that turn from green to bright orange as they mature

### Habitat

Dwarf Tamarillo is a potential weed of open forests, rainforest gaps and margins, riparian vegetation, urban bushland, forestry plantations and disturbed sites in sub-tropical, tropical and warmer temperate regions.





1. Young plant. 2. Close-up of hairy stems showing pairs on small leafy structures in leaf forks.

## Reproduction and Dispersal

This species mainly reproduces by seed, though it may sucker if damaged. The seeds are almost certainly dispersed by birds and other animals that eat the bright orange mature fruit.

## Why is it an Emerging Threat?

In its natural range, Dwarf Tamarillo grows as a weedy plant on stream banks, in bushland, and in rocky sites. In Australia, this plant has been found growing in disturbed bushland, along roadsides and in riparian vegetation along creeks. It also has the potential to invade open forests and gaps and margins in rainforest habitats. Like other species in this genus, it appears to be readily spread by animals that eat its fruit and has the potential to become a serious environmental weed.

## Control Methods

Individual plants can be manually removed with the aid of suitable tools, but care must be taken to remove the crown, as plants may regrow from the base. There is no information readily available on the control of Dwarf Tamarillo with herbicides, but it is very similar in nature to Wild Tobacco and may respond in a similar way. Some of the products registered for control of Wild Tobacco can be used to control similar environmental weeds such as Dwarf Tamarillo via APVMA off-label Permit 11463 (see <http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PERI1463.PDF>).

For example, some formulations of triclopyr + picloram, fluroxypyr or 2,4-D may be applied as a foliar spray directly to the target plants. Other formulations of these same chemicals can be applied as a cut stump or basal bark treatment. Please read the permit carefully for the exact products and rates to use and, unless otherwise stated in this permit, the use of these products must be in accordance with the instructions on their labels. Within other state boundaries, it is recommended that all managers consult any relevant permits or government legislation applicable to their region.

## Look a-likes

Dwarf Tamarillo is very similar to some other introduced species including Wild Tobacco (*Solanum mauritanum*) and Tamarillo (*Solanum betaceum*). However, Wild Tobacco has purple flowers and rounded fruit, and its leaves are not heart-shaped. Tamarillo does have heart-shaped leaves and white flowers, but it has larger fruit that hang downwards and its leaves do not have a pair of small leafy structures at their bases.



**Top.** Purple flowers and round fruit of Wild Tobacco.  
**Bottom.** Heart-shaped leaves and drooping fruit of Tamarillo.

The control methods referred to in Weed Watch™ should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the utilisation of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, Technigro does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

This information has been developed with the assistance of Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2011

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