



1. Clumping habit. 2. Large leaves in a fan-shaped arrangement. 3. Flowers. 4. Mature fruit capsules with seeds.



## Giant Bird-of-Paradise (*Strelitzia nicolai*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Giant Bird-of-Paradise is a member of the Strelitziaceae plant family and is native to southern Africa. It is cultivated as a garden ornamental and is emerging as a weed of rainforests, wetlands and riparian vegetation in sub-tropical Australia.

### Distribution

The first naturalised record of this species in Australia was in 2001, when several young plants were found growing at Mount Nebo north-west of Brisbane. Since then several further populations have been recorded at Mount Glorious and in the D'Aguiar Range. There have also been a few populations recorded in conservation areas in the southern suburbs of Brisbane and on the Gold Coast.

A single population has also been recorded along Darling Mills Creek in the northern suburbs of Sydney.

### Description

Giant Bird-of-Paradise is a large clump-forming plant that resembles a banana tree. It produces multiple woody stems reaching up to 12 m tall. The stems are light to dark grey in colour, and marked with old leaf scars. The massive leaves (up to 1.8 m long and 45-60 cm wide) are arranged like a fan at the top of the stems. These leaves are attached to the stem by long thick stalks and develop a torn appearance over time.

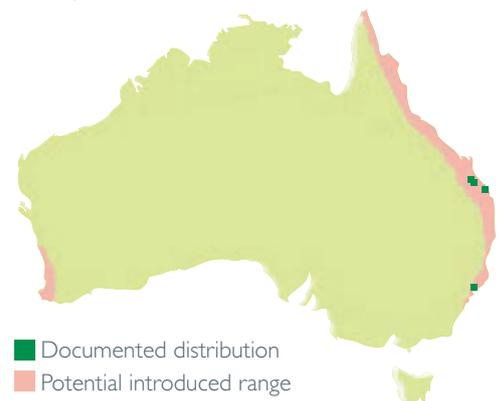
The flowers are borne in clusters in the forks of some of the leaves. Each flower is made up of a large dark blue bract at the base, white sepals and bluish-purple petals that form a "tongue". The whole flower resembles the head of a bird and can be as much as 45 cm long. Flowering occurs throughout the year, but mainly during spring and summer. The flowers are followed by three-sided fruit capsules which split open to reveal three compartments when mature. They contain several black seeds, each with a bright orange woolly aril attached to it.

### Quick Facts

- > Large clump-forming plant that resembles a banana tree
- > Massive leaves arranged like a fan at the top of the stems
- > Large blue and white flowers that resemble the head of a bird.
- > Black seeds with a bright orange woolly aril

### Habitat

This species has been recorded growing in the understorey of wet sclerophyll forest and sub-tropical rainforest at higher altitudes in the ranges west of Brisbane. It has also been recorded from riparian vegetation, open forests and paperbark swamps in lowland and coastal areas.





1. Seedlings in paperbark swamp. 2. Infestation of young plants in bushland in Brisbane (Photo is courtesy of: Rob Mollison, BCC).

## Reproduction and Dispersal

Giant Bird-of-Paradise reproduces mainly by seed, which are probably dispersed by birds and other animals that are attracted by the bright orange arils. Currawongs, for example, have been observed foraging in crowns of flowering cultivated plants.

## Why is it an Emerging Threat?

This species is beginning to spread from cultivation and become established in the understorey of relatively intact native vegetation. It normally appears in the vicinity of large cultivated plants, though seedlings and young plants have been found several hundred metres away from parent plants. While most naturalised plants are relatively small at present, if left uncontrolled they will eventually grow to form large clumps and replace native species.

## Control Methods

As most plants encountered are young, they can be hand-pulled or manually removed with the aid of suitable tools. However, attention must be taken to remove the entire crown, as plants may regrow from the base. Material should be bagged and disposed of in a suitable manner, especially in wetter sites.

While larger plants may require control with herbicides, there is no information readily available on the effectiveness of herbicides. Vigilant II gel is registered for the control of woody weeds, such as Giant Bird-of-Paradise, in non-crop areas. It can be applied using the cut stump or axe cut methods. Some other products can also be used for the control of woody environmental weeds in Queensland via APVMA off-label Permit 11463 (see <http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER11463.PDF>). For example, formulations of Glyphosate can be applied as a cut stump, stem injection or basal bark application. However, if control is required along waterways, only herbicides with an aquatic registration should be used (e.g. Round-up Biactive or Weedmaster Duo). Please read the permit carefully for the exact products and rates to use and, unless otherwise stated in the 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

Giant Bird-of-Paradise can be easily confused with Traveller's Palm (*Ravenala madagascariensis*) and Bird-of-Paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*) when it is very young. Older plants can be easily distinguished. Giant Bird-of-Paradise has blue and white flowers, while Traveller's Palm has green and white flowers and Bird-of-Paradise has blue and yellow flowers.



Top. Similar habit of Traveller's Palm.

Bottom. Green and white flowers.

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 **The IVM Group** and Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2014

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Post: PO Box 397, Varsity Lakes, QLD, 4227

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