

# Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

## Clematis decipiens

### H.Eichler ex Jeanes (RANUNCULACEAE)

#### Conservation status

Australia: Not listed

Northern Territory: Vulnerable



Photo: D. Albrecht

#### Description

*Clematis decipiens* is a dioecious woody climber, to 5 m high. It resembles *C. microphylla*, but the leaves have 12-15 leaflets. Leaflets are narrow-ovate to lanceolate, entire or deeply three-sect, becoming glabrous with age. Flowers in axillary and terminal panicles. Tepals pale green to creamy white. The small achenes are light brown, glabrous or sparsely hairy, compressed-ovoid with corky margins. The awns are 1.5–3.5 cm long (Eichler & Jeanes 2007).

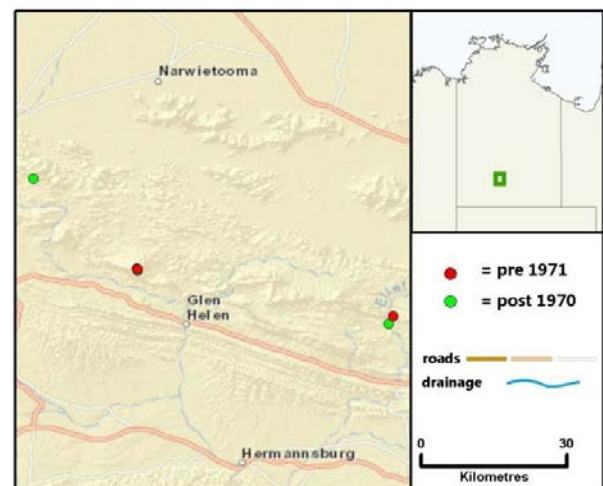
Flowering: July–October.

#### Distribution

*Clematis decipiens* is known in the Northern Territory (NT) from three sites in the West MacDonnell Ranges: headwaters of the Ellery Creek catchment, Mt Zeil and Mt Sonder. The subpopulations at each of these sites are very small, occupying no more than ½-1 hectare each. The size of the NT population has not yet been quantified, but is estimated to number fewer than 1 000 mature individuals (D. Albrecht, pers.obs.). The West MacDonnell Ranges is well surveyed and it is considered unlikely that additional

populations will be found. This species is, however, widespread in south-eastern Australia (Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, the south-east corner of South Australia and also on the Bass Strait Islands) (Eichler & Jeanes 2007).

*Conservation reserves where reported:*  
West MacDonnell National Park.



Known locations of *Clematis decipiens*

#### Ecology

This species is intrinsically rare in the NT. It is restricted to shaded, deep, sheltered gully heads below cliffs in the West MacDonnell Ranges where the microclimate is relatively mesic. Typically, soils are shallow and the

surrounding vegetation is very dense (White et al. 2000). Throughout its continental range, the species usually occurs in dryland forests and woodlands, but also in wetter sub-coastal forests (Eichler & Jeanes 2007). Very little is known about the population dynamics and reproductive biology of the NT population.

### Conservation assessment

*Clematis decipiens* is classified in the NT as **Vulnerable** (under criterion D1) based on:

- number of mature individuals <1 000.

### Threatening processes

There are no known extant threats to the NT population of *Clematis decipiens*.

Given its small size and restricted distribution, the population is vulnerable to the effects of stochastic processes such as disease.

Currently, its habitat is largely weed free, however invasion by Buffel Grass would represent a significant threat to the NT population, especially if the sites become more fire prone.

### Conservation objectives and management

The most important management objective for this species at present is the maintenance of habitat integrity. This requires monitoring of weed (especially Buffel Grass) infestation in and around the sites. Quantification of the population size and mapping of its extent would also be useful. Further, investigation of seed bank dynamics and germination requirements would be useful for predicting this species' response to changing climate and/or habitat parameters.

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### References

- White, M., Albrecht, D., Duguid, A., Latz, P., and Hamilton, M. (2000). Plant species and sites of botanical significance in the southern bioregions of the Northern Territory. Volume 1: significant vascular plants. A report to the Australian Heritage Commission. (Arid Lands Environment Centre, Alice Springs.)
- Eichler, H.J. & Jeanes J.A. (2007). Ranunculaceae. Flora of Australia Volume 2 p. 461. ABRS/CSIRO Melbourne, Australia.