

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

Typhonium sp. Sandover

(B.G. Thomson 2360)
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Conservation status

Australia: Not listed

Northern Territory: Vulnerable



Photo: D. Albrecht

Description

Typhonium sp. Sandover is a perennial herb that dies back to an underground corm. The leaves are large and arrow-shaped. The complex inflorescence is foul-smelling and subtended by a large spathe with a dark purple blade and swollen green tubular lower portion. The long sterile spadix and male flowers emerge from the lower tubular portion of the spathe, whilst the female flowers remain enclosed.

Typhonium sp. Sandover is unique in possessing the short and dorsiventrally flattened (rather than terete) sterile organs and pollen ornamentation (Matt Barrett pers. comm.).

Flowering: April (wild) and September (cultivated).

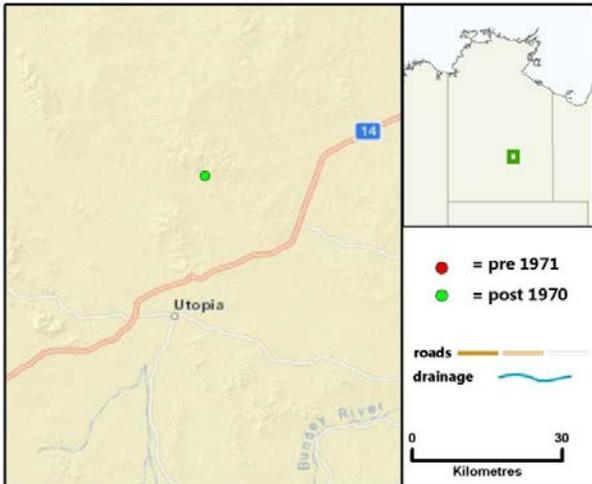
Distribution

Typhonium sp. Sandover is endemic to the Northern Territory (NT) where it is known only from one location in the Burt Bioregion near Utopia. Here it occurs along a Red Gum creekline with a dense species-rich

understorey. *Typhonium* sp. Sandover was first collected in 1965 and identified as *T. alismifolium*. The population was rediscovered in 2010 with the assistance of traditional owners and Central Land Council staff. The population is very small and consists of only about one dozen plants. A similar habitat several kilometres away was surveyed for *Typhonium* without success. Although there has been limited searches for the species it is conspicuous and distinctive (albeit only periodically when conditions are suitable) and traditional owners who were very familiar with the species were not aware of other populations. A pattern of short range endemism is common in the genus in NT.

The western section of the land trust where the *Typhonium* occurs is not a highly sampled area, and there remains an element of data deficiency with the possibility of further subpopulations being located.

Conservation reserves where reported:
None.



Known locations of *Typhonium* sp. Sandover

Ecology

Typhonium are geophytes, seasonally dormant plants that emerge annually from underground storage organs such as corms.

Typhonium sp. Sandover occurs along a Red Gum creekline with a dense species-rich understorey. Common associated species include *Themeda triandra*, *Ipomoea racemigera*, *Alternanthera nana*, *Eragrostis cumingii* and *Eulalia aurea*.

Conservation assessment

Typhonium sp. Sandover is classified in the NT as **Vulnerable** (under criterion D2) based on:

- restricted to a very small area (<20 km²), with fewer than five locations; and
- plausible threats from grazing by feral animals and livestock and invasion by weeds, such that the species is capable of becoming Critically Endangered or even Extinct in a very short time period.

Threatening processes

The species is susceptible to grazing impacts and competition from and displacement by weeds especially the highly invasive and successful Couch Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliata*) (Duguid et al 2005).

Conservation objectives and management

Further species-specific targeted survey is required in the vicinity of the known population to determine whether additional populations are present. The known population should be accurately mapped and a monitoring project established to gather data on fecundity, threats, recruitment events and changes in population structure over time. Pending the outcomes of the survey work and monitoring it may be necessary to undertake exclusion fencing and weed control work. It may also be necessary to consider a program for bolstering population numbers.

Compiled by

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References

- Duguid, A., Barnetson, J., Clifford, B., Pavey, C., Albrecht, D., Risler, J. and McNellie, M. (2005). *Wetlands in the arid Northern Territory*. A report to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage on the inventory and significance of wetlands in the arid NT. Northern Territory Government Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts, Alice Springs.