



WEED OF THE MONTH: MAY

TUFTED HONEY FLOWER

(Melianthus comosus)



(Photos: E. Cousins, kangaroo in Melianthus at Lands End; leaves and seed capsules of Melianthus)

The tufted honey flower is another escapee from ornamental garden plantings. Native to south-western Africa, this small erect shrub grows to about 1.5 m tall, with many branches. The leaves are bright green, and arranged in pairs on opposite sides of the branches. These leaves are up to 20cm long, and saw-toothed. The spring flowers are red or orange; the seed capsules look like inflated bladders with 4 sides, and contain up to 8 round, dark coloured seeds. These seeds can be blown on the wind, and can float on water.

Cape Jervis is in the unenviable position of having the largest reported infestation of this weed in Australia, according to the Queensland government website <http://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/data/>. Members of COOTS (Conservation of our Threatened Species), a subgroup of the Australian Plant Society, work hard to control it in the restoration area near Lands End.