

# Leopard Ash Bushland Park Report 2023

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Our FEP volunteer team commenced operations in July 2015 firstly clearing the rampant growth of climbing Asparagus and feathered asparagus (*Asparagus africanus* & *Asparagus aethiopicus* cv. *Sprengeri*)<sup>1</sup> that was smothering the canopy. This was largely achieved until the lush rainy seasons of 2021 and 2022 caused a rampant explosion of invasive weeds again so this has set our weed control program back considerably.

2023 has seen us gradually regaining control of the regrowth Climbing Asparagus and Madeira Vine (*Anredera cordifolia*)<sup>2</sup> are the worst invasive weeds we have to deal with, by manual methods and judicious spraying of herbicide. Progress has been retarded unfortunately by a lack of volunteers as numbers have decreased due to members of the team moving away or through illness.

We now have some infrastructure installed in the park in the form of a shipping container to house our tools, sprayers and herbicides courtesy of the Toowoomba Regional Council so that will be a great asset for our volunteers. A future project may entail installing some interpretive botanical signage for some of the unique native plants that grow in the park similar to those found in the Franke's Scrub Reserve (Franke Rd, Highfields).

In conclusion, I would like to thank my loyal team of volunteers for their efforts this year and hope that some of the park's neighbours may see fit to join our team in the coming year so that they too can feel a sense of ownership of this environmental bushland gem.

1. Climbing asparagus and basket asparagus are native to southern Africa. They are climbing plants causing serious environmental problems in bushland. Climbing asparagus fern easily scrambles over other vegetation up to into the canopy. Feathered asparagus up to 5m high in canopy. They also smother ground vegetation. Spread by birds distributing berries and dumping of rubbish.
2. Madeira vine is a highly invasive weed capable of smothering and destroying native vegetation. Its climbing stems can totally envelop the canopy layer, while its trailing stems also smother the ground layer of invaded habitats. This reduces light penetration, eventually killing the plants underneath and preventing the germination and regeneration of native plants. The sheer weight of dense infestations can even bring down trees in the canopy layer, and in this way Madeira vine can change the structure of invaded communities, eventually destroying them. This species is currently regarded as one of the five most invasive plants in south-eastern Queensland.