



SAVING OUR SPECIES

Small purple-pea

Swainsona recta
Endangered

The small purple-pea is a slender, erect perennial herb that grows to around 30 cm tall. Its leaves are divided into up to six pairs of 10 mm long, very narrow leaflets, each with a pointed tip.

It bears one or more spikes of between 10 and 20 purple pea-type flowers, between late September and early December. These are followed by globular pods up to 10 mm long, ripening in late December.

Historically, the small purple-pea was recorded in towns such as Carcoar, Culcairn and Wagga Wagga, where it is now most likely extinct.

Populations still exist in the Queanbeyan-Williamsdale and Wellington-Mudgee areas. It is also known from the Australian Capital Territory, and natural populations were once known in north-east Victoria.

The small purple-pea grows in the grassy understorey of woodlands and in open forests, in association with understorey dominants that include kangaroo grass *Themeda australis*, poa tussocks *Poa spp.* and spear-grasses *Austrostipa spp.*

Landholders from Queanbeyan to Williamsdale are keeping an eye out for new populations of the small purple-pea.

One of the largest of the southern populations of the small purple-pea grows on a railway easement. This easement has been protected from heavy grazing since the railway was built in the mid-1800s.

Other native plants have flowers like the small purple-pea and grow in similar locations. These include the vine-like creeping *hovea* and *glycines*, and the bushy, climbing *hardenbergia*. There is also an introduced vetch which can be easily confused with the small purple-pea.

Support local action and help save the small purple-pea



The small purple-pea can be a single-stemmed or a multi-stemmed plant.

Photo: Anna Murphy/OEH



Surveying small purple-peas on the Queanbeyan-Williamsdale railway easement. Photo: Jackie Taylor/OEH

The owners of one recently discovered, and highly significant, population have fenced off some areas of high-quality habitat from domestic stock and feral pigs. They are actively managing their land to ensure the small purple-pea is protected there.

Members of the ACT National Parks Association have also cared for the small purple-pea on public land by undertaking careful hand weeding. The Office of Environment and Heritage and the Australian National Botanic Gardens have collaborated to collect seed and to propagate small purple-pea seedlings. Some of this seed has also been used to grow plants and re-establish populations in Victoria.

Parts of the railway easement, where one of the largest southern populations is found, is being carefully managed to protect the small purple-pea. Contractors are reinforcing embankments to prevent the site from eroding. The Office of Environment and Heritage is planning low-heat burns in areas where the grass has become thick, to reduce competition with the pea and to encourage the small purple-pea seeds to germinate.

The NSW Government's Biodiversity Conservation Trust encourages and supports landholders to conserve and manage biodiversity on private land. Landholders who wish to protect the small purple-pea on their properties can find out more about private land conservation options here: www.bct.nsw.gov.au

Additional grants that assist landholders to protect native vegetation on private land may also be available through Local Land Services and Landcare organisations.

If you are keen to know about volunteering and research projects related to threatened species, you can find more information here:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/help-save-our-threatened-species>

If you are interested in investigating or confirming if you have the small purple-pea on your property, or you wish to raise awareness and inspire your community to think and care about the small purple-pea and other threatened species, please contact the *Saving our Species* team so we will forward you some resources to assist you: savingourspecies@environment.nsw.gov.au

Saving our Species is a NSW Government flagship program targeting on-ground action to secure threatened plants and animals from extinction. The program aims to increase the number of species that can survive securely in the wild.

Saving our Species can only succeed if we work together. We need your support to ensure that today's actions help to secure the future of NSW's threatened species.

To find out more about threatened species in NSW and the Saving our Species program: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/SOS