

Senecio Daisies

Senecio is a very large almost cosmopolitan genus of over 1300 species in the very large Asteraceae or Daisy family.

The greatest diversity is in South America and Africa. Australia has 87 species (including 10 naturalised species). In Western Australia 34 species are known (27 native and 7 naturalised).

Senecio has two types of daisy flowers those with ray florets (above left) and those without ray florets (above right).

Senecio plants in Australia are mostly yellow flowered herbs (above left, below right), soft shrubs (above right) and shrubs (below and opposite, *S. gregorii*).

Senecio species may be called 'Groundsel' from the Mediterranean species *S. vulgaris*. The two weedy species described here - *Senecio condylus* and *S. elegans* come from South Africa.



A *Senecio gregorii* shrub in full flower from north of Kalgoorlie alongside a salt lake.



Senecio pinnatifolous var. *latilobus* is the native *Senecio* that should be found in Perth's coastal bushland. Note the divided leaves. See over for seed and inflorescence characters that distinguish the weed *S. condylus*.

Native *Senecio* species and beach dune weeds in Western Australia

Reference

Keighery, GJ and Keighery, BJ 2017. Status of *Senecio condylus* (Asteraceae) in Western Australia. Western Australian Naturalist 30: 236-244.

WA Native and Weed Species Pamphlet 2, February 2019.

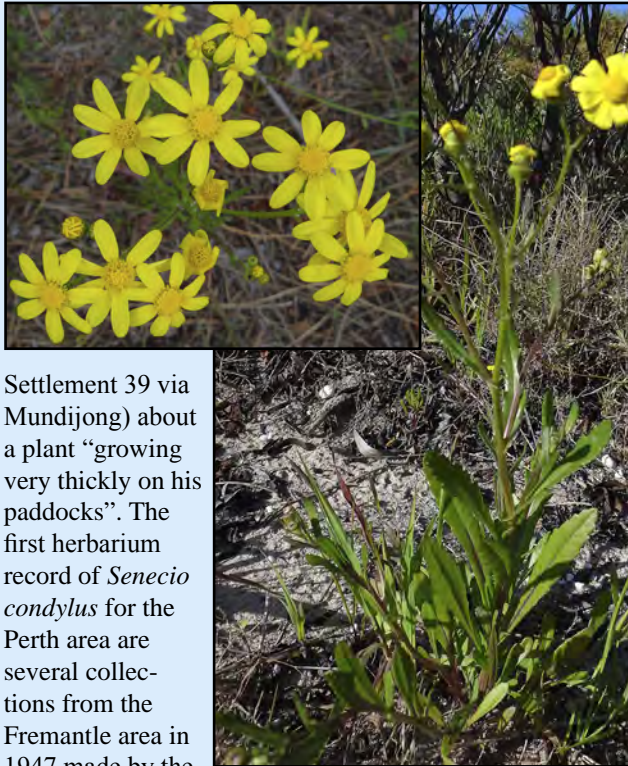
Text Greg and Bronwen Keighery.
Photos and design Bronwen Keighery.
Cover photo *Senecio condylus* at Ocean Reef Bushland.

Senecio Beach Dune Weeds

Two annual herb species of *Senecio* are found as weeds in the white sand dunes - *Senecio condylus* (yellow flowered herb below) and *Senecio elegans* (pink flowered herb far right).

Senecio condylus

Senecio condylus was first recorded as a weed in 1924. This comes from an enquiry in the Western Mail, 'Plants for Identification' (25/09/ 1924, page 4) from JB (of Group



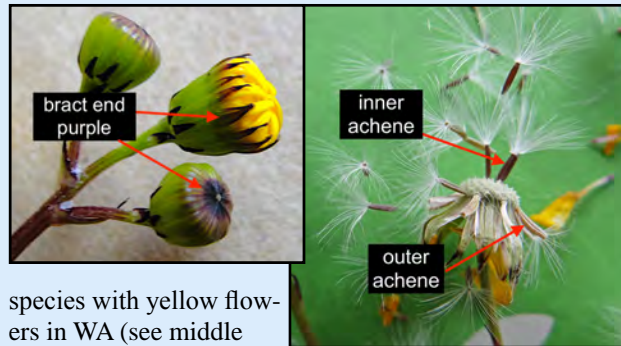
Settlement 39 via Mundijong) about a plant "growing very thickly on his paddocks". The first herbarium record of *Senecio condylus* for the Perth area are several collections from the Fremantle area in 1947 made by the Dairy Section of the WA Agriculture Department suggesting it was present in areas used as fodder for dairy cows. Subsequent collections were from South Perth in 1953, Spearwood in 1980, Bunbury area in 2001 and Busselton in 2006.

Senecio condylus is currently the most visible and abundant *Senecio* species in the Perth area with very large populations on disturbed dunes at City Beach, Floreat Park, Cottesloe, South Perth, along the Freeway margins and most coastal roads in the Perth-Fremantle area.

The earliest known records of *Senecio condylus* in bushland were in the early 1990s from the Port Kennedy Bushland and Lake Richmond where it was recorded

as a weed. Records have now appeared from Pagononi Bushland (2000), Lake Cooloongup (2005), Piney Lakes (2008), Anstey-Keane Damplands (2013) and Kensington Bushland (2016). As Perth has expanded north *S. condylus* has also, being found around car parks, road-edges and disturbed dunes up to Ocean Reef (front background photo). In the Bunbury area *S. condylus* has begun to invade coastal bushland sites such as the Preston to Ocean Regional Park and sand rises in the Mangroves around the Leschenault Inlet. All of these records are after fire or alongside tracks or other disturbed areas.

Senecio condylus differs from other annual *Senecio*



species with yellow flowers in WA (see middle front panel) in having:

- the outer floral bracts with purple pigmentation in upper third (above left);
- markedly different outer margin achenes (that is the seeds shown above right); and
- persistent coarse hairs on the lower surface of the leaves (below right).

Senecio condylus is currently found on the southern Swan Coastal Plain between Perth and Busselton, normally on deep sands. **It is a highly invasive weed and new infestations should be removed from bushland. Extreme care must be taken when collecting *Senecio* seed for restoration projects.**

Until recently *Senecio condylus* in Western Australia was called *S. lautus* subsp. *maritimus* or *S. lautus* subsp. *dissectifolius*.



Senecio elegans

Senecio elegans has been a weed of beaches in WA for more than 150 years. It is an attractive plant (photo left and below) and may have been introduced deliberately.

Most daisy seeds have a fluffy appendage on the top of the seeds (see photos opposite left and front) that acts like a parachute and distributes daisy seeds over long distances. The most widespread weedy herbs in WA are daisies. *Senecio elegans* has spread up the coast to the Capes from the first known established plants in Albany. There are a few records north of here but it does not seem to have become established. Interestingly it stays near the beach and rarely becomes common in the intact beach bushland.

The bright purple-pink flowers of *Senecio elegans* are difficult to miss. Plants without flowers are distinguished by the semi-succulent foliage.



More *Senecio* weeds

Other weedy *Senecio* species include: *S. angulatus* (Cannary Creeper); *S. glastifolius* (Holly Leafed Senecio); *S. jacobaea* (Ragwort); and *S. vulgaris* (Groundsel). *S. glastifolius* is perennial shrub with attractive mauve daisies and is highly invasive weed of bushland. The largest known populations were in Albany and much effort has been taken to remove plants with the aim to eradicate it.