

Christ Thorn

(Euphorbia splendens)



What is a succulent?
It is a plant that has some parts that are more than normally thickened and fleshy, usually to retain water in arid climates or soil conditions.

Alternative Common Name

Crown of thorns, Christ plant, Christusdoring (Afrikaans)

Description

It is a succulent climbing shrub growing to 1.8m tall, with densely spiny stems. The straight, slender spines, up to 3cm long, help it scramble over other plants. The leaves are found mainly on new growth, and are egg shaped, with the narrower end at the base, up to 3.5cm long and 1.5 cm broad. The flowers are small, subtended by a pair of conspicuous petal-like leaves, variably red, pink or yellow, up to 12mm broad.

Where does this species come from?

This species comes from Madagascar.

How does it spread?

The plant does not often set seed, but is easy to propagate vegetatively; branches broken from an established plant root readily as cuttings.

Why is it a problem?

The sap is moderately poisonous and causes irritation on contact with skin or eyes. If ingested, it causes severe stomach pain, irritation of the throat and mouth and vomiting.

It grows over our indigenous grasses and shrubs, robbing them of light, air and nutrients, ultimately killing them. It is **not** a food source for animals.

A huge problem is that home owners are using this plant as hedging around their property. This obstructs the animals from moving around freely and prevents them from reaching food and water sources.

Small antelope like duiker and bushbuck can be seriously injured by the thorns.



How to control the plant?

Please remove this plant root and all. Plants will re-grow from cuttings left behind.

PLEASE DO NOT THROW INTO THE BUSH AS IT WILL RE-ROOT AND CONTINUE TO GROW.

The plants can be disposed off by burying them in a deep hole (approximately 1m) or by contacting the Honorary Rangers to assist with removal.

Below are a few more images of the plants in Marloth Park.

