

RICHMOND BIRDWING VINE

Pararistolochia praevenosa

Help bring back the Richmond birdwing butterfly by planting the Richmond birdwing vine!

The Richmond birdwing butterfly

The Richmond birdwing was once abundant near Brisbane and is the largest and most beautiful butterfly in Southeastern Queensland. Today it is rarely seen in urban southeastern Queensland where it has suffered from a decline in abundance of its only caterpillar food, the Richmond birdwing vine.



Ecology

This vine grows particularly well after rain and during autumn and winter when there are few or no caterpillars to feed on them. Only midges pollinate the flowers (even some midges have their purpose!). The capsules begin to form in spring, slowly expand to ripen over summer and turn golden orange in autumn then fall unopened from the vine. Australian brush turkeys help germination by burying the seeds with their claws as they feed on the fruit. The vines have become rare and there is a need to plant this vine in gardens and reserves to provide sufficient food for caterpillars of the Birdwing butterfly.

Major threats

- Land clearing/urbanisation.
- Prolonged drought
- **Dutchman's pipe** – *A Fatal Attraction*. Birdwing eggs are also laid on the exotic Dutchman's pipe vine (*Aristolochia elegans*) but the leaves are toxic and kill the larvae. This introduced pest is also common in gardens and as a weed in bushland, creating a 'death trap' for any larvae that hatch out to feed on the plants.

Planting Instructions. The vine -

- Grows throughout the year but is rarely fast-growing.
- Flowers Sept-Nov.
- Needs semi-shade. Feed with Osmocote © and occasionally Aquasol ©.
- Needs water frequently when first planted & keep the soil moist thereafter.
- Plant 1 m from host tree or trellis. Don't handle roots; plant with pot soil.
- Tie a string to the stake to help the plant climb.
- Take care not to break off fragile climbing leaders.
- Grows to a height of approximately 5 m.
- Does not like fresh eucalypt mulch as it can burn the new growth.