

Boophane disticha

Fan leaved Boophane / Tumbleweed

Family: Amaryllidaceae (Amaryllis family)



Collection Number:

Description: A deciduous perennial up to 30 cm tall, with a large bulb. The bulb is conspicuous because a large portion of it is above ground, it has a tunic of thin, papery scales. The grey-green leaves are erect and strap-like, arranged in a fan-shaped crown. The deep pink flowers form a single inflorescence on an umbel, which is produced before the leaves develop. The dry, fruiting head forms the characteristic "tumbleweed" which is dispersed by wind, the dried head releasing its seeds as it "tumbles" along the ground.

Habitat: *Boophane disticha* has a very wide distribution, occurring in areas of sandy soils in southern Africa, such as the Kalahari and Karoo, but also in parts of central and east Africa. On the reserve it has been found growing amongst rocks in the kloofs of the Losberg.

General information: Also known as Cape poison bulb, gifbol and sore-eye flower. The flowers can cause headaches and sore eyes. The Hottentots and Khoisan (Bushmen) were familiar with the poisonous properties long before the arrival of the white man, and the San used it as a source of poison for their arrows. The plant produces a powerful hallucinogen it can be used as a sedative, but it must be used very carefully as even a small overdose may be fatal. The Xhosa use the bulb and leaves to treat wounds, and the thick bulb covering can be used to ease strained muscles. The bulb is also used for headaches and chest pains.

Other members of the *Amoryllis* family also found on NamibRand are *Nerine laticornia*, the beautiful vlei lily, which can be seen in the Die Duine area following summer rainfall. It grows along roadsides and near pans.

Cyrtanthus herrei is a flame lily with spectacular red flowers which has been found growing on the Losberg. It was previously thought to be endemic to the Richtersveld.