

FACT SHEET: Weed control

This fact sheet provides information on why and how weeds are controlled.



Weeds have a significant impact on the landscape for all types of land uses. A weed can be defined as ‘a plant that has or has the potential to have a detrimental effect on economic, social or conservation values’.

There are two categories of weeds:

1. **Environmental weeds** are those which invade bushland and threaten the biodiversity of natural ecosystems. Environmental weeds impact native plants by competing for light, nutrients, water, space and pollinators. By limiting the growth of native plants, weeds reduce the food and habitat available for wildlife, resulting in more degraded natural environments with fewer species.
2. **Agricultural weeds** are those which invade crops and pasture reducing productivity.

Many weeds, such as blackberries, fit into both categories.

Legal responsibility

The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* regulates primary catchment issues such as noxious weeds, pest animals and soil management.

The Department of Economic Development Jobs Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) is the Victorian government agency with responsibility for administering this Act.

The Act defines four categories of noxious weeds:

- State Prohibited weeds
- Regionally Prohibited weeds
- Regionally Controlled weeds
- Restricted weeds.

Weeds in each of these categories are listed on the [DEDJTR Invasive Plants Classification webpage](#).

The DEDJTR specifies that land owners must take all reasonable steps to eradicate regionally prohibited weeds, prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds, and prevent the spread of – and as far as possible eradicate – established pest animals on their land.

Controlling weeds

Effective weed control often requires a weed to be targeted in a variety of different ways at different points in its life cycle, depending also on the extent of the weed.

For example, for some woody weeds you can hand weed the young plants when infestations are small. Juvenile woody weeds can be cut and painted. Adult woody weeds can be drilled and filled or ringbark.

Further information on methods for different types of weeds can be found in the [Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning's](#) Bushbroker No 8 Information Sheet – weeds.

What you can do

Minimise establishment of weeds

- Avoid importing fill or hay feed from external sources unless you are certain that it is weed-free.
- Ensure that machinery used for activities such as slashing is free of weed seeds.
- Make sure that you are aware of and can identify the main ‘threatening’ weed species spreading in your region. For instance, can you identify Serrated Tussock Grass or Chilean Needle Grass?



- Avoid planting known environmental weeds, and where practicable choose indigenous native species instead.

No matter how careful you are, some weed seeds will still find their way onto your property and the best way to stop them germinating is to provide strong competition from non-weedy plants. This may be a healthy cover of indigenous vegetation or a swathe of productive pasture.

As a rule, avoid soil disturbance, as this will open up the soil, bring weeds seeds to the surface and damage the 'good competitors' so that weeds will thrive.

Manage grazing wisely

Overgrazing pastures creates bare areas and opportunities for weeds like Paterson's Curse and Scotch Thistle to establish.

Equally hazardous is 'set stocking' or leaving stock in a large area for a long period of time, which enables the stock to be 'picky' and eat out the good palatable species while leaving the 'weedy' ones to flourish.

A better approach is rotational or cell grazing, which when strategically used will improve pastures and make it far more difficult for weeds to establish and flourish.

A very effective option is to establish smaller paddocks and laneways by using low-cost electric fencing.

Grazing of native bushland is very destructive and does not add much to productivity. In most cases, the best management of bushland areas includes the complete exclusion of stock. However in some environments, particularly in grasslands where current herbaceous and grassy weed cover is high, limited grazing may be beneficial at an appropriate timing and rate.

Weed by hand

If you detect weeds when an infestation is small, then hand weeding is often the best option and should be done well before the plant sets seed.

Make sure to find out what parts of the plant need to be removed, and whether special care should

be taken in handling or disposing of the plant material.

Small areas of weeds can also be controlled by smothering or with equipment such as weed burners – but obviously keep fire restrictions in mind!

Apply herbicides responsibly

All weeds have weak spots in their life cycle when they are most susceptible to herbicides.

The correct herbicide must be used and applied by a suitably qualified person, with the recommended method, at the right time and at the correct rate. Hence, a good level of research is always required.

Some herbicides are 'selective' and can be used to target certain categories of plants while sparing the plants you want to keep. For instance, herbicides designed specifically for broad-leaved plants can be used to kill weeds such as Cape Weed, but they will not kill the grasses, thus minimising 'baring the area out'.

If your weed control method exposes the soil, it is important to re-plant, re-sow or encourage the 'good competitors' to fill that space which would otherwise be re-colonised by weeds.

Herbicides applied at the wrong time of the year can be ineffective. This wastes both your time and your money. For example, herbicides used on Scotch Thistle are much more efficient when sprayed in autumn on rosettes than if sprayed on mature plants.

Mature plants have already produced large amounts of seeds, which simply add to the seed bank reserves in the soil.

Chemical controls can have negative impacts on the surrounding environment if applied incorrectly and may harm non-target species.

The 1996 regulations of the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of use) Act 1992* require users of certain agricultural chemicals to hold an Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP) or be under the direct supervision of an ACUP holder.

Local Landcare groups regularly organise Farm Chemical Users Courses.

Use biological control

Specifically researched, tested and approved biological control agents (such as rusts, beetles and wasps) are available for certain weed species.

In most cases they only slow down the progress of the weed.

Further information on biological control of weeds in Victoria including local weeds such as Bridal Creeper can be found on the [Department of Economic Development Jobs Transport and Resources \(DEDJTR\) website](#).

Suggested timings for weed control

The table below provides a broad simplification for timing of removal and chemical treatment of the listed weeds that are common in Nillumbik.

The [DEDJTR website](#) has information notes for most of these weeds. It is important to consult these notes for more detailed information on planning a program to control these weeds.

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Common Name	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Pattersons Curse												
Spanish Heath												
Broom												
St John's Wort												
Gorse												
Spear Thistle												
Tradescantia												
Serrated Tussock												
English Ivy												
Blackberry												
Hawthorn												
Radiata Pine												
Sweet Pittosporum												
Cootamundra Wattle												
Early Black Wattle												
Boneseed												
Cotoneaster												

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Useful links

Common weeds of Nillumbik- weed
identification guide

[Department of Economic Development Jobs
Transport and Resources](#), or call 136 186

[DEDJTR – A-Z of common weeds](#)

[DEDJTR – Invasive plant specifications](#)

[DEDJTR - Prescribed measures for the
control of noxious weeds](#)

[DEDJTR - State Prohibited weeds](#)

[DEDJTR – Weed warning – drought fire and
flood](#)

[DEDJTR – Legislation Policy and Permits](#)

