

Weed control

Weeds, or invasive plants, are one of the main extinction threats to Australia's native plants and animals. Some weeds were introduced initially as garden plants, and others accidentally introduced and spread through seeds or plant material. Some native species become weeds if they spread aggressively beyond their natural range.

What are weeds?

Weeds are invasive plants that damage the landscape by competing with or eliminating native plants, disrupting ecosystem function, reducing habitat for native wildlife, and harbouring pest animals.

Why control weeds?

Weeds cost public and private landholders more than a billion dollars a year in Australia. They smother native vegetation on roadsides, forests and woodlands (e.g., bridal creeper), reduce access to creeks and rivers and affect water quality (e.g., blackberry, willow), limit pasture for stock grazing and affect stock health (e.g., serrated tussock, Paterson's curse), compete with crops, and contaminate produce. Given the impact of weeds on native species, environmental quality and agriculture, and the huge investment landholders, farmers, government and volunteers make to fight weeds, weeds affect everyone in the community directly or indirectly.



Gorse can dominate landscapes and be costly to control (Photo: Agriculture Victoria)

Legal responsibility on your land

Invasive plants that cause environmental or economic harm, or have the potential to cause such harm, are listed as 'noxious' under the Victorian *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act). However, not all damaging invasive plants are listed under legislation. Unlisted weeds that cause damage are known as environmental or agricultural weeds, or both, depending on their impact. A further category of weeds is new and emerging weeds.

There are four legislated categories of invasive plants identified under the CaLP Act. The Agriculture Victoria website provides current classifications of invasive plant status, updated to current conditions.

Weed category	Responsible party	Requirement
State prohibited	State Government	Eradicate on all land across Victoria
Regionally prohibited	Landholder, lessee or manager	Eradicate these species from their land
Regionally controlled	Landholder, lessee or manager	Prevent growth and spread on their land
Restricted weeds	Landholder, community, State government	Do not sell or transport these species or their propagules

Prevention is the best control

Weeds can easily spread and establish in the landscape. People can accidentally transport weed seed and plant material along with vehicles, machinery, clothing, soil, fodder or animals. Other weeds escape from gardens.

To prevent the spread and establishment of weeds:

- Promote and protect native vegetation cover, including leaf litter.
- Practice good weed hygiene by keeping tools, equipment (especially grass mowing equipment), vehicles and clothes free of soil and weed material.
- Avoid disturbing or moving soil as it can promote germination of weed seeds lying dormant in the soil (e.g., gorse).
- Avoid bringing soil from elsewhere to your property, or if necessary obtain clean soil from a reliable source.
- Purchasing weed-free fodder, use a designated feed out location, and regularly check it for weeds.
- Control weeds before they get established or set seed.
- Learn to identify weeds and assist others to do so.

Early detection

Apart from meeting legal requirements, it is easier and cheaper to remove weeds from the landscape early, when they first emerge. Regular monitoring can detect weeds

when they appear. There is usually a window of opportunity for action when a weed first invades a new location.



Wheel Cactus is a Regionally Controlled weed in North Central Victoria (Photo: Connecting Country)

If you see an unusual plant on your property, seek assistance to identify it and take appropriate action as early as possible. Once a weed becomes established, grows to maturity, flowers and sets seed, the cost and effort to control it grows exponentially and the likelihood of eradication decreases.

Plant lifecycle

It helps to understand the lifecycle of the particular weed you are targeting. Understanding what time of year it is actively growing and how it reproduces will help you identify the best approach to weed management.



For example, bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) is a perennial creeping vine that invades bushland. It is a Restricted weed in the north central catchment, and a Weed of National Significance (WONS). Controlling this weed manually is possible, but it is important to remove the entire plant including the extensive

underground tubers. If controlling using a registered herbicide, spraying is more effective in late winter or spring as the plant is actively growing and absorbs the herbicide.

Integrated management

Successful weed management typically involves an integrated approach using multiple control techniques suited to your particular weed species, equipment, experience, budget and situation. Unfortunately there is no silver bullet

with weed management. Success usually involves a combination of techniques used consistently over time.

Common weed control methods include:

- Hand pulling or manual removal of the plant and roots.
- Chemical treatment with a registered herbicide, via a spot spray, boom spray, stem injection, or cutting and painting.
- Mechanical grooming to remove the entire plant.



Mechanical grooming can be an effective way to remove woody weeds such as gorse (Photo: Agriculture Victoria)

Using contractors

Controlling weeds is hard work. Engaging a weed control contractor can save you time and effort, plus provide ideas and techniques to implement yourself in the future. Good contractors have appropriate equipment, know how to use chemicals safely, and bring a wealth of knowledge and about effective weed control. Contractors should have appropriate insurance, experience and chemical user permits.

Monitoring after weed control

Regular monitoring and follow up action are essential parts of a weed control plan. Monitoring involves inspecting previously treated areas each season, and removing any weed seedlings or regrowth. You may wish to revegetate with locally indigenous understorey species to discourage weeds and create habitat for local native animals. Removing weeds is a important part of any revegetation project.

The Atlas of Living (ALA) app is a useful tool to upload your weed (and native plant) records and also view nearby weed infestations.

More information

There an enormous amount of literature, brochures, factsheets and information about most of the invasive species across our region and how to manage them. For further information please call us on (03) 5472 1594 or visit the weed control section on our website:

www.connectingcountry.org.au