

Treating Weeds in Your Surf Coast Garden

Your guide to chemical and non-chemical treatment methods

About this publication

Surf Coast Shire has developed this information sheet to complement *Weeds of the Surf Coast Shire*. Published in 2013, *Weeds of the Surf Coast Shire* aims to help you to identify common environmental weeds in your home garden and lists the recommended treatment options for each. Also available, as a companion to *Weeds of the Surf Coast Shire* is a series of four brochures focusing on the *Top 20 Weeds* of locations across the Shire. You can access copies via the website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

This sheet provides more detail about chemical and non-chemical treatment methods, which will assist you in effectively treating the environmental weeds in your garden.

Weeds and your Surf Coast Garden

Many environmental weeds have started out as popular garden plants and grown to become major threats to the biodiversity of our natural and productive environments.

In the natural environment, environmental weeds invade local indigenous vegetation communities, stunting their survival and regeneration capabilities, which in turn threatens native fauna habitats. In the productive environment, they can affect agricultural and horticultural capacities, for example by invading crops and pastures.

Such weeds are commonly found in residential gardens, on nature strips and in parks and reserves across the Surf Coast, often in close proximity to areas of natural significance. These areas, which include coastal and bushland reserves, are highly valued for the beauty and integrity of their natural environments.

Controlling the spread of environmental weeds into these areas - from home gardens, nature strips and the like - is an ongoing issue requiring Council and local volunteer groups to invest substantial time, effort and resources.

You can do your bit by effectively treating and controlling the environmental weeds in your garden.

Weed treatment in a nutshell

Weed treatment is the use of **chemical** (e.g. herbicide) and/or **non-chemical** (e.g. manual removal, use of organic materials) methods to discourage the growth of unwanted and/or invasive plants. The choice of method depends on **plant type** and **size**, and your **preference** as a gardener.

The most effective treatment targets specific plant types and life cycles as different weeds respond better to some treatment methods than others. (Refer to the *Plant glossary* for more information about plant types and life cycles). Whilst chemical control is effective for most situations, the use of alternative, non-chemical and organic methods is becoming increasingly popular and has been shown to be equally effective in many instances.

Weeds of the Surf Coast Shire lists the recommended treatment methods for each specific weed. The tables overleaf describe each method in detail. Note that you should always seek professional advice in relation to using chemicals.

Home garden weed treatment vs integrated weed management

Whereas home garden weed treatment has traditionally comprised manual removal or use of chemicals as needed, **integrated weed management** involves the use of complementary weed control methods, often as part of an overall land management plan.

An integrated weed management plan is ideal for larger infestations and/or where weed control is required across large-sized properties or sites. It:

- identifies weed species and levels of infestation;
- describes the biology and ecology of weeds to be treated; and
- sets out the various methods to be employed across the year and on an ongoing basis.

Plant glossary

Plant types identified in *Weeds of the Surf Coast Shire* include:

- **Trees and shrubs** – having woody stems and branches;
- **Herbs and succulents** – non-woody plants with soft broad leaves, including plants with bulbs, tubers or rhizomes (i.e. plants with underground parts from which re-growth can occur);
- **Climbers and creepers** – weak-stemmed plants that rely on other plants and structures (e.g. walls) for support; and
- **Grasses and rushes** – non-woody plants.

The different plant life cycles are:

- **Ephemerals** – plants with short life cycles, typically between three weeks and several months;
- **Annuals** – plants lasting one year;
- **Biennial** – plants lasting two years; and
- **Perennials** – may live for several years and grow from seed or underground parts, or both.

Further information

Refer to *Weeds of the Surf Coast Shire* (2013) for more information about identifying and treating weeds in your garden. You can also contact the Shire's Environmental Unit (Ph: 5261 0600 Email: info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au) or access the website (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

If you wish to read more about weeds and weed treatment methods, *Weed: The Ultimate Gardener's Guide to Organic Weed Control* by T. Marshall (Harper Collins Publishers, 2010) is highly recommended.

Home garden weed treatment methods

Chemical treatment methods (synthetic and non-synthetic)



Foliar Spray

Foliar spray involves applying herbicide to the leaves of plants. This method is appropriate for all plant types except tall woody weeds, weeds with large amounts of foliage or larger infestations. Plant type will determine the herbicide used and timing of control. Note that some herbicides are specific to plant groups, others are generic. Some plants (e.g. Ivy) require a penetrant to be added to the chemical so the herbicide can absorb into the foliage. Spray when the plant is actively growing (some plants are dormant during winter). Be cautious of spraying if the plant is producing fruit.



Cut and Paint

Cut and paint is the rapid application of herbicide to the cut surface of a plant's trunk. This method is appropriate for smaller woody weeds which are actively growing (e.g. Blackberry, Sweet Briar). Cut plant as close to ground as possible and apply systemic herbicide (e.g. undiluted glyphosate) within 10-30 seconds.



Scrape and Paint

Scrape and paint is a variation on the cut and paint technique. Bark is scraped with a knife within 1m of the base of the vine and painted with systemic herbicide. Multiple scrapes can be applied to larger vines. This method is appropriate for woody vines and creepers.



Frilling

Frilling is a similar technique to ringbarking except 'frills' are made with an axe to the trunk of a woody weed. Herbicide is applied immediately to the frill. Appropriate for large woody weeds.



Organically Derived (Non-Synthetic) Herbicides

Organic herbicides are becoming more widely available. Organic herbicides are made from plant-based essential oils and work by stripping the outer coating of contacted plant and seed material, causing cell collapse and desiccation.



Fertiliser

Application of fertiliser can alter soil nutrients, providing favourable or unfavourable conditions for plant growth. Local knowledge and research will be required for this method.

Non-chemical treatment methods



Hand Removal/Pulling

Removing the plant via hand or mechanical means. Appropriate for all plant types. All parts capable of re-growth should be removed and disposed of carefully. For plants with rhizomes (underground stem), cut into the soil around the plant and remove as any small pieces left behind will re-grow.



Cut Trunk and Stems

Cut trunk and stems involves removing the plant by sawing its trunk and branches, leaving stump in ground. Stump can be left or grubbed. Some stumps may re-sprout. Appropriate for small shrubs to larger trees.



Grubbing

Grubbing is the use of a mattock or similar tool to remove the plant and its roots. Appropriate for plants with developed root systems that are difficult to remove by hand pulling.



Mulch/Smother

Mulching is the smothering of plants or plant materials to prevent or discourage re-growth. Mulch can be organic (e.g. weed-free chip mulch, fibre matting, newspaper, coir, jute, wool, paper, cardboard) and the like. Mulching with compost or mulch material is effective for some grasses, provided a thick layer of newspaper or cardboard is laid first.



Ringbark

Ringbarking involves chipping a ring of 2-5cm wide around the trunk. The internal water and nutrient system is destroyed, killing the plant. This method is appropriate for many woody plants.



Slashing

Mowing or slashing weeds prior to flowering/seeding using a whipper snipper, lawnmower or tractor. Repeated slashing of above ground foliage of bulb-like perennial weeds eventually exhausts underground food reserves. This method can take several years to be effective, so a combination of slashing with other methods may be warranted. Some plants such as Cape Weed have adaptive flowering mechanisms and can re-sprout very close to the ground after slashing.



Steam/Flame Weeding

Steam or flame weeding is the application of steam or flame onto the plant. Appropriate for broad-leaf weeds.



Solarisation

Solarisation is the use of the sun to destroy plants. Plastic bags or sheets are used to generate heat and kill most plants and weeds.

Points to note

- Plant material should be taken from the site and disposed of appropriately.
- Bulbs and plant material can be left to fully rot in plastic bags, placed in the sun for two to three months before emptying the bags into your kerbside green waste collection bin.
- Soil disturbance resulting from the grubbing of plants will encourage other weeds to colonise the area. Mulch or plant out as soon as possible.
- Always maintain a sustained effort across the year.