

# FRIENDS OF HODDLES CREEK NEWSLETTER

## The ten worst weeds in the Yarra Valley

### Are you growing any of them?

Weed species can have substantial environmental and economic impact, hastening land degradation (erosion, salinisation) and reducing landscape and recreational benefits of bushland areas. Weed species that are garden plants can find their way into bushland through dumping of cuttings and garden waste, carriage on car, bike or truck tyres, eating of fruits and seeds by native birds or animals (or by stock) and dispersal of the seeds in droppings.

To maintain the unique qualities of our bushland areas, we need to be able to recognise weeds and prevent their spread. This issue of the FOHC Newsletter contains information on declared noxious weeds in the Shire of Yarra Ranges (1-9), plus a personal 'favourite' as number 10.

Further details can be obtained from Sophie Akers, at the Shire of Yarra Ranges (phone 9294 6148). Sophie has detailed information sheets on controlling individual weed species and she kindly supplied copies of the Environmental Weeds brochure that accompanies this newsletter.

#### 1. Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).

This is a high priority established weed under the Port Phillip and Westernport Weed Action Plan that includes Hoddles Creek. Ragwort can be very difficult to control and is poisonous to stock, especially cattle and horses. It reproduces from seed, from root fragments and from the crown of the plant, which persists from season to season.

Ragwort is an upright plant 0.6 to 1m tall, with numerous separate stems. Leaves are deeply lobed, ragged in appearance, dark green on top and lighter underneath and flowers are bright yellow, daisy-like and about 1cm across. Ragwort flowers from October to March.

Each plant produces numerous seeds, most of which germinate almost immediately, but some may remain viable in the soil for many

years. The seeds are carried short distances by wind and may be spread long distances by water, stock or machinery and in hay or silage. Root fragments are spread by cultivation and on earth moving machinery.

#### 2. Cape broom (*Genista monspessulana*).

Cape broom is native to scrub and open woodlands in the Mediterranean region, Portugal and the Azores. It was probably introduced to Australia as a garden or hedge plant and was widely planted last century. In Victoria, infestations

### SPRING COMPETITION

Our Spring competition asked you for a list of native birds you have identified in Hoddles Creek over the last year. The winning entry was from eagle eyed Michelle Knoll, who spotted the following species:

Australian Raven, Bell Miner, Black Cormorant, Black Duck, Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike, Blue Wren, Boobook Owl, Bronzewing Pigeon, Brown Goshawk, Crescent Honeyeater, Crimson Rosella, Diamond Finch, Dusky Woodswallow, Eastern Rosella, Eastern Spinebill, Fantail, Firetail Finch, Galah, Gang-Gang Cockatoo, Golden Whistler, Grey Butcherbird, Grey Shrike Thrush, Grey Heron, Kestrel, King Parrot, Kookaburra, Lewins Honeyeater, Little Pied Cormorant, Lyrebird, Magpie, Magpie Lark, Mountain Duck, New Holland Honeyeater, Peregrine Falcon, Pied Currawong, Red Robin, Red Wattle Bird, Scrub Wren, Silver eye, Spur Winged Plover, Sulphur crested Cockatoo, Swallow, Swamp Hen, Spotted Pardalote, Spotted Turtle Dove, Tawny Frogmouth, Tom Tit, Wedge Tailed Eagle, Whipbird, White Eyed Duck, White Ibis, White Naped Honeyeater, White Necked Heron, Willie Wagtail, Wood Duck, Yellow Robin, Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoo.

Michelle is already enjoying her copy of Simpson and Day's Field Guide to Australian Birds.



# Top 10 weeds

occur mainly on grazing land and dry sclerophyll forests.

Cape broom is an upright evergreen shrub up to 3m high and it reproduces by seed. Leaves consist of 3 leaflets attached centrally to a short stalk, with the central leaflet slightly longer than the rest. Flowers are bright yellow and pea-like, occurring singly or in clusters. Flowering occurs mainly from late winter to spring, but can also occur towards the end of summer.

Dense thickets on grazing lands, in native vegetation and on roadsides, exclude most other vegetation and provide harbour for rabbits and foxes. In native vegetation, cape broom excludes desirable indigenous species.

Road graders and earth moving equipment are probably the most important agents in longer-distance seed movement. Other means of seed dispersal include slashing, water, farm machinery and vehicles, contaminated agricultural products and animals moving through infested areas.

### 3. Flax leaf broom (*Genista linifolia*).

Flax-leaved broom can be distinguished by its stalkless or nearly stalkless leaves which have rolled edges and are densely hairy on the underside.

### 4. Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*).

Introduced from South Africa, boneseed is a woody shrub with fleshy fruit which dry to form a hard stone containing the seed. The plant is a much branched shrub or small tree to 6 m high that has yellow flowers from July to December and globular fruit, 6 to 8 mm diameter. Dense infestations virtually eliminate native understorey species and reduce the regeneration abilities of native trees and shrubs. Birds, including starlings and blackbirds, are attracted to the fleshy fruits of boneseed and are responsible for dispersal of the seed. Foxes are also an important vector.

**5. Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* spp).** Needing no introduction, the blackberry is an important weed because of its effective seed distribution and its ability to propagate from cane tips. Its dense canopy excludes light from the soil surface,

effectively competing with and dominating other vegetation. The impenetrable prickly brambles provide harbour for pest animals such as rabbits and foxes.

When growing along water courses blackberries restrict access. Where infestation has occurred along banks of a watercourse, water will erode around the root mass resulting in cubic metres of soil and blackberry being washed into the water. This increases sediment load, reduces water quality and spreads blackberry downstream. Large infestations are a considerable fire hazard, due to large amounts of dead canes in the brambles.

### 6. Spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)

This is often confused with the Scotch thistle, also a weed. It occurs in a range of environments, particularly annual pastures and neglected areas. Although seed can germinate at any time of the year, there are two main germination times, late summer to autumn and late winter to spring. This results in infestations consisting of plants of different size and ages. Up to 200 flower heads and 8000 seeds are produced per plant.

### 7. Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*).

Tutsan is an erect, branching, evergreen shrub to 1m tall. The leaves are oval-shaped and have an aromatic smell when crushed. Flowers are bright yellow and arranged in terminal clusters. The fruit are black berries. Tutsan is a prolific seeder that prefers shaded sites and forest edges.

### 8. Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

Gorse or furze is an erect, spiny, much-branched perennial shrub that belongs to the pea family. It grows up to 3m high, forming dense thickets and reproduces by seed that germinates in autumn and spring. Plants flower when about 18 months old. Gorse burns readily and dense infestations can present a serious fire hazard. The plant is a prolific seeder with up to 6 million seeds being produced per hectare per year. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for 25 years or more and may be stimulated to germinate by disturbance, heat through fire or exposure to light.

### 9. St Johns Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*).

This perennial herb is usually about

80 cm high and reproduces from crowns, roots and by seed. It flowers late October to January, golden yellow with black dots on the margins. Seeds adhere to stock and other animals, and are carried in the digestive tract of animals. Seedlings have been observed in cattle dung. Seed spreads only short distances by wind, but can be carried long distances by water, machinery and animals.

### 10. Agapanthus.

'Off with their heads' is the Shire's slogan to deal with this widespread plant that has become a significant environmental problem in bushland areas, destroying native wildflowers and vegetation. The Shire is working to eradicate the species from urban and bushland areas.

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Control of weed species can involve removal by hand, cutting stems and painting with herbicide, drilling and filling holes in larger plants with herbicide, overspray with herbicide or digging out. The Shire brochure contains more information on the best ways to tackle individual weeds. Why not read it through to help plan your weed attack?

Thanks again to Jill the postie for delivering the FOHC Newsletter.

Thanks to Melbourne Water for their grant towards this Newsletter.

Like to join Friends of Hoddles Creek or want more information about the group? We'd love to hear from you. Simply complete the form below and mail to us at FOHC, PO Box 298 Yarra Junction, Vic 3797. Membership is free – all you need is an interest in your local area.

Name:.....

Address: .....

Phone: .....

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I'd like to join Friends of Hoddles Creek.

I'd like more information. Please ring me.