



# Controlling weeds

Weeds are plants that grow in places they aren't wanted and impact habitat. Weeds can be grasses, herbs, shrubs or trees and include species from other countries and also species from other regions of Australia. Usually, they are fast-growing, reproduce quickly, and disperse widely. Weeds pose a significant threat to Victoria's ecosystems. They compete with indigenous species, alter the structure of habitat (for example, by creating thickets), and can rapidly spread if not managed effectively. Because weeds are highly adaptable and resilient, using a single method to control them can be ineffective or lead to resistance. Combining different methods is the best way to manage weeds.

## Location and habitat

You can apply these weed control methods statewide across a range of habitats.



Above: Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)

## General information

- Use a multi-method approach throughout the year to reduce resistance and target weeds at different life stages
- Start weeding in high quality habitat and move outwards to create a buffer
- Prioritise early intervention before the plant has flowers and seeds
- Match the method to the weed type, size, and habitat sensitivity
- Consider impacts on non-target species and soil disturbance
- Use dyes added to herbicide to track coverage
- Dispose of weed material responsibly to prevent weeds re-establishing

## Methods

### Hand weeding

For small and young plants, low numbers of weeds, and small areas, hand weeding can be a suitable method. Plants can be physically removed with gloves, or using a tool such as a trowel. It is particularly useful in areas where you want to minimise disturbance to other plants.

- Weeding is easiest when soil is moist
- Remove the entire root system to prevent regrowth
- Pull woody weeds from the base and turn them upside down if they are not seeding or fruiting. If they are fruiting, put the plant in a bag and dispose of it

### Cut and paint (woody species >0.5m <1.5m)

For woody plants, cutting the stem and painting the stump with herbicide is a suitable method.

- Cut the trunk close to ground - lower cuts reduce chance of reshooting
- Use systemic herbicide that targets the plant's vascular system
- Apply herbicide following the instructions on the label
- Avoid soil contamination of cut or the tool you are using to paint the stem

### Spot spraying

- Spot spraying involves directly coating the leaves and stems of weeds with herbicide. Herbicide must be applied all over the plant to ensure it is effective. There are many ways to apply herbicide, including hand-operated backpacks with sprayers.
- Choose the herbicide based on species and site conditions (for example, use a herbicide specifically for woody weeds to treat Blackberry)
- Avoid spraying in wind, rain, and extreme temperatures
- Consider risks to indigenous plants, waterways, and fauna
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment and follow label instructions

### Drill and fill / frill and fill (woody weeds <1.5m)

The drill and fill or frill and fill methods are suitable for woody weeds that provide habitat for wildlife, because they leave the structure of the plant intact. Drilling involves drilling small holes into the trunk of the plant, while frilling involves making shallow cuts using a sharp knife or axe.

- Make holes or cuts around base of trunk
- Fill holes or cuts with herbicide following the instructions on the label



Above: African Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*)

## Maintenance and monitoring


- Regularly inspect treated areas for regrowth or new infestations
- Monitor seasonal changes and adjust methods accordingly
- Keep records of treatment dates, methods, and outcomes
- Reapply or switch methods if weeds persist or re-emerge
- Engage community groups for ongoing support


## Safety

Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when undertaking land management. Follow all label instructions on equipment and local regulations. Be mindful of weather conditions. Do not conduct land management on days of extreme or catastrophic fire danger or total fire ban.

## Further information

For further advice and support, please contact Trust for Nature.

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