



Weedbusters!

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Issue 9
August 2006

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Schools, groups, and individuals around the country are celebrating their wins in the regional Weedbusters Awards 2006.

Weed Warriors take home the loot

From books to barrows, knapsack sprayers to forks and loppers, winning Weedbusters have plenty of new tools to help them in their war against weeds.

Some will be kitted out with Weedbusters T-shirts as they tackle weeds on their patch; others have won a weekend away to get tips from other Weedbusters groups.

Judges included conservation stalwarts, botanists, ecologists, and gardening gurus. Awards were presented by mayors, managers, and councillors, and ceremonies ranged from formal through to on-site smokos and good old fashioned barbeques.

Weedbusters New Zealand would like to congratulate and thank all those who took part and made these awards such a great success. Your support is appreciated and your efforts are applauded!



Governor's Bay Landcare Group members Sally and Dick Tripp, and Ray Vickers.

Woody Weed gets ready to spread



Woody Weed and onlookers, National Fieldays 2006

As winter moves into springtime, the weeds also start moving - and Woody Weed is no exception.

Woody has already done his dash in captivity at the National Agricultural Fieldays in the Waikato in June, and is expected to be seen around the countryside as the temperatures warm up.

Woody Weed and his mates are likely to turn up at any place, any time, spreading the word about weeds, so watch out!

Working together
to protect New Zealand

Stopping groundcovers in their tracks

They may be small and seemingly insignificant, but groundcovers are some of the most destructive weeds to invade natural areas.

Although they don't grow tall enough to shade out other plants, or climb up trees and smother them, groundcovers have their own way of causing environmental chaos - by blanketing the ground so that native seeds can't germinate.

If enough groundcovers carpet an area, a whole generation of native seedlings can be missing, meaning that there are no new native plants to establish when older ones reach the end of their natural life.



Periwinkle (*Vinca major*)

These areas without a healthy young understorey soon become opened up to other weedy trees and shrubs, such as privet, wattles, and so on.

Many groundcover species started out as ornamental garden plants or even pot plants, but have become so rampant that they are a nuisance even in 'captivity'.

Unfortunately, this fall from favour means that groundcovers removed from gardens can end up dumped into bush and wetland margins. As most grow easily from small stem fragments, they soon establish there and rapidly spread further into these areas.



Aluminium plant (*Galeobdolon luteum*)

Getting rid of groundcovers

Many groundcovers can grow from the tiniest of stem fragments, so handweeding them will only work if you make sure you remove all the weed material from the site, including leaves and underground stems.

A variation on this treatment for tradescantia is to roll the plant material up like a carpet to avoid breaking it into too many pieces.

Then, remove this plant material from the site, taking care that you don't drop any pieces. Put it in a plastic bag and dispose of this greenwaste carefully, preferably at a refuse transfer station. Revisit the site regularly to remove any new weed growth.

Overall spraying may be needed for large infestations. Follow label directions carefully and don't let herbicides come in contact with desired plant species.

For more information on control methods, check out the weed search at www.weedbusters.org.nz

Ivy in a league of its own

When it comes to problem weeds in natural areas, ivy (*Hedera* sp.) is in a league all of its own.

Not only does ivy smother the ground, making it difficult for young native seedlings to establish, but many *hedera* species also sucker onto any surface they can find.

These suckers aren't just there for support - they suck nutrients and water from the plant the ivy is growing on, meaning that even if the ivy's

connection to its roots are severed, this weed can survive and continue growing.

Pulling the ivy off and severing that connection between the suckers and the plant it is growing on can also send the damaged supporting plant into shock, in some cases killing it.

This relationship between the ivy and the plant it is growing on also means that spraying ivy

with herbicide results in the supporting plant getting an often lethal dose of herbicide too.

This growth habit leaves very few control options once ivy has started moving from covering the ground to spreading up trees and shrubs.

Any fragments of ivy must be disposed of carefully so they don't regrow. Ivy in natural areas should be controlled as soon as it starts to establish.





In the thick of it...

After writing this newsletter, I have a confession to make. The very first plant I ever learnt to propagate was that pernicious groundcover, tradescantia.

Back then we called it wandering Jew, and it was a favourite pot plant that could be bought at most garden centres or school fairs. And I was a black-fingered kid who's mum was determined that I would learn to be as green-fingered as she was.

Up until that point, everything I attempted to grow died; an early indication, perhaps, of my later career working with weeds. But amazingly, astonishingly, the wandering Jew not only survived, but flourished under my neglect and toxic touch!

And as well as keeping it alive, I could propagate from stems at (in hindsight) an alarming rate. Soon we had pots of the stuff everywhere, full of healthy wandering Jew cuttings.

Ashamed as I am to admit it, I don't remember how we disposed of these plants. Maybe we gave them to friends. Maybe mum liberated them to the compost pile or garden when we ran out of space.

Karma has seen to it that this obsession with keeping tradescantia alive as a child has come back to haunt me as an adult. There are few plants I loathe as much as this one, both for the environmental damage it does and for the grief it causes to those who are looking after our bush areas.

While you can't judge past actions by present knowledge, you can certainly learn from your mistakes with this or any other garden plant that starts going wild.

In the weeds world, there is nothing quite so effective as prevention. If in doubt, rip it out, and save yourself (and others) a lot of hard graft further down the track.

Carolyn Lewis
National Weedbusters Coordinator

Gisborne Weedbusters write...

Gisborne schools are getting involved in the eradication of invasive weeds, thanks to the new East Cape-Hawkes Bay Weedbusters innovation, "Adopt a Spot".

The outcome of the programme is to get schools to "adopt a spot" in a reserve in their neighbourhood which has problems with invasive weeds, and eventually take ownership of this area for their future generations and to take pride in their neighbourhood.

The aim of the programme is for children to learn what invasive weeds are and why they are a problem. We put on our weed detective hats and go searching around the reserve for the weed which we have discussed with the help of little identification booklets especially made up for the kids in their own language.

It is absolutely amazing the enthusiasm that these children show - they really can spot those weeds and see why they are a problem.

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Manutake School and Kirsty MacLaurin, Weedbusters Coordinator (right rear)

The Jones kids are coming to town!

There's nothing quite like a good read, and a rollicking rhyme in a colourful storybook is a great way to get the Weedbusters message across to a whole new audience.

"When the Jones Kids Came to Town: A Weedbusters Adventure" was the brainchild of Ian Popay (Department of Conservation), Wendy Mead (Environment Waikato), and Carolyn Lewis (Weedbusters).

The original idea was to develop a resource that could be used in classrooms to explain to children what weeds are and how they can help stop the spread.

From there it developed into a 24-page, full-colour children's storybook with a strong environmental message.

Illustrated by talented Ngaruawahia artist Janet Hodgetts, the storybook tells the story of the Jones kids and their fight to save a school gully from the Garden Thugs - with the help of Grandma, Woody Weed, and all their whanau and friends, of course!

Over 1500 copies have already been pre-ordered for the upcoming print run.

For more information, contact:
info@weedbusters.org.nz



Gisborne Weedbusters write... *cont'd*

An area is cleared of the weeds (the big ugly ones are already done by contractors or groups who are in partnership with the project) and then we plant natives and other alternatives which suppress the weedy weeds. I try and make sure that there is at least one plant per child as this gives each child ownership and pride in what they are doing.

Of course one of the most important aspects of the programme is the ongoing care of the plants, as we all know that these weeds can come back with a vengeance! We discuss how often we are going to come back and weed and check on the new plantings, and so far all the children are keen as mustard to get back to the reserve and check on their plants.

All the schools are in partnership with the owner/managing organisation of the reserve and groups which are associated with the reserve.

So far Mangapapa School has "adopted a spot" in Turanga Gardens in partnership with Gisborne District Council and Turanga Lions, who won a 'Highly Commended' in the recent Weedbuster Awards for their efforts in this reserve.

Muriwai School has "adopted a spot" at Wherowhero Lagoon in partnership with the Ngai Tamanuhiri Trust who own the land.

I have three more schools that are undertaking their projects in the next month. I have only started with five schools as a trial run to see if the programme is successful, and to make sure the kids and teachers are enthusiastic and will take ownership of their 'spot'.

Weedbusters will be there to support each school, but it will be awesome to see each school really go for it and take ownership.

So far the two schools that have taken part have given me huge encouragement that this programme is going to work. It was such a buzz seeing the kids searching for the weeds and really getting stuck in when pulling them out. They love that fact that they have a good plant each to plant, and they show their plants off to each other, talking about its name and its medicinal values, and so on.

If anyone wants any information on what I'm doing please get in touch with me through email kmaclaurin@doc.govt.nz.

Kirsty Gaddum
Gisborne Weedbusters Coordinator

Want to win a \$50 Gardening New Zealand voucher?

To go into the monthly draw to win a \$50 Gardening New Zealand voucher, enter the 'Name This Weed' competition at

www.weedbusters.org.nz



German ivy
(*Senecio mikanoides*)



Bartlettina
(*Bartlettina sordida*)



Asiatic knotweed
(*Reynoutria japonica*)



Tree lupin
(*Lupinus arboreus*)

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and all regional councils and unitary authorities

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