



Weedbusters!

www.weedbusters.org.nz

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Despite some dodgy weather, Guides and Scouts have been taking time out for some serious weedbusting around the country.



Lupins take a lashing as moot mucks in

Photo: Craig Alexander

Over 120 Rover Scouts attending the 63rd National Moot in Canterbury got stuck into some weedbusting work, removing lupins along the Ashley River.

The Rovers are focussed on service and were keen to do something for conservation. Their efforts helped remove the colourful lupins that are choking up Canterbury's braided rivers and harbouring predators that threaten the native bird populations that nest on islands along these rivers.

The group, made up of scouts from Germany, Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand, spent the best part of the day on this weeding bee. Working near water can be fun, and despite the overcast weather, the chore did not appear to be too arduous.

The volunteers are keen to be updated on progress with the Ashley River, and DOC's weeds biodiversity ranger Craig Alexander will be keeping in touch with them.

- Gnome Hannah-Brown, DOC

Gully weeds guided out



Photo: Gerard Kelly

It was gloves and gumboots for 40 enthusiastic Guides from the Waikato and Bay of Plenty who went weedbusting in Hamilton's Hungerford Gully.

The two day gully restoration project was part of the Guides' annual camp being held at the Hamilton Gardens. Invasive weeds were removed and the area was replanted with native trees provided by Hamilton City Council.

It was a great effort by the youngsters, who had a great time despite some wet weather and lots of grubby clothes.

Working together

to protect New Zealand

Graceful grass or problem pest?

Structural, striking and something of a fashion statement in modern gardens, ornamental grasses are a designer's dream - but can be an environmental nightmare.

While most are well behaved, some of these grasses have become a little too enthusiastic in their habits, and are spreading rapidly from gardens into gullies, wetlands and bush areas. Some of them are also proving to be serious weeds when they move into pastureland.



Chinese pennisetum (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*)

Nassella tussock (*Stipa trichotoma*) was one grass that was recognised as a problem in the 1940s, when it was spreading into pastureland and infesting large areas.

As concern mounted over the impact of this particularly nasty species, the Nassella Tussock Act 1946 was passed to allow for the establishment of Tussock Boards that employed rangers to control this weed.

While decades of dedicated ranging has meant that nassella tussock is now at low levels in most areas of the country, one close relation, Mexican needlegrass (*Stipa tenuissima*) is turning up as an ornamental in gardens, and another, Chilean needlegrass (*Stipa neesiana*), has already emerged as a problem in some drier areas of New Zealand.

Another group of nasty grasses is the pennisetums. There are four pennisetums already banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand because of their weedy ways, and the others are being watched closely for signs that they will jump the fence and cause a problem in future.



Mexican needlegrass (*Stipa tenuissima*)

Because it is difficult to tell some easily propagated weedy grasses from native species, they often end up being sold at fairs and markets and swapped between generous gardeners.

Some of New Zealand's worst weedy grasses have been introduced and spread around in this way. Don't be fooled by good looks – check that you are planting a graceful grass in your garden, not introducing an invasive intruder.

Common pampas
(*Cortaderia selloana*)
Purple pampas
(*Cortaderia jubata*)

pampas

Native of South America.

Upright flowerheads are creamy (*C. selloana*) or purple (*C. jubata*).

Flowerheads appear from January to June (*C. selloana*) or from January to March (*C. jubata*).

Wide, central midrib to each leaf.

Leaves snap readily when tugged.

Plant 'builds up' on its base with dead leaves spiralling like woodshavings under the new foliage.



Photo: Michelle Gibbs

Cortaderia toetoe
Cortaderia richardii
Cortaderia fulvens
Cortaderia splendens

toetoe

Native to New Zealand.

Drooping golden flowerheads

Flowerheads appear from September to January

Distinct parallel veins along leaf between midrib and leaf edge.

Leaves don't snap readily when tugged.

Doesn't 'builds up' on its base, and dead leaves don't spiral like woodshavings.



In the thick of it...

As the fog rolls in, the cold winds blow, and the frosts and snow bite across the country, heading out for a spot of weedbusting is understandably not at the top of many people's wishlist!

It's a good time, though, to regroup and review what's been happening in the last few months around the country.

Weedbusters seems to be entrenched in most regions now. While some areas went off with a bang when the programme was launched, others have taken a bit longer to get off the ground, but are now rapidly catching up.

It's more common now to hear people at shows and other events say that they recognise the Weedbusters logo and Woody Weed.

More groups and individuals are making contact through the Weedbusters website for information and to promote upcoming events. There are over 66,000 hits on www.weedbusters.org.nz each month now, and with the weed search function, containing information on over 100 weeds including control methods and photos, ready to launch in the next few weeks, this number is expected to rise.

In some areas, planning for Conservation Week events with weedbusting activities is underway. More district and city councils are also initiating their own weeding bees and weeds awareness events or getting involved in those organised by others, which is fantastic.

Keep up the great work, everyone!

Carolyn Lewis
Acting National
Weedbusters Coordinator

Manawatu Weedbusters write...

Horizons Regional Council Environmental Management Officers and Woody Weed were out and about at the Manfeild Garden Festival in early May to give advice and information to the keen gardeners attending this popular Feilding event.

At the Horizons tent there were the occasional gasps of recognition when visitors spotted the display plants and realised these weeds were contently growing in their gardens. There were plenty of questions about control methods too.

One lucky local won native plants for correctly identifying the pampas plants from the toetoe. Altogether, over 15,000 people attended the festival.

Woody Weed was also let loose on a group of unsuspecting Kiwi Conservation Club kids at one of their meetings. Once they got Woody back under control, Horizon's biosecurity

officers spoke to the kids and their parents about weeds, with interactive sessions, brainstorming, and a couple of skits to drive the message home.

Afterwards the officers spent some time with the parents answering questions about specific weeds issues, while Woody wilted in the corner, upset that he had missed part of the Super 12 game that was being televised that night!

- Elaine Iddon and Hilary Webb



Woody and friends at Manfeild Photo: Elaine Iddon

Schools and weeds

Around 60 Bay of Plenty children got up close and personal with some weeds at the Enviroschools Expo held in Tauranga.

Five groups of school children visited the weeds stand, where Tim Senior and Des Pooley of Environment Bay of Plenty sent them off on a mission: find a weed, work out why it is a weed, and think about what can be done about it.

This was followed by a video clip on weeds and a game using weedy flash cards from Environment Bay of Plenty's Weedbusters kit for schools. Each student went away with some Weedbusters information to share with their families and friends.



Environment Bay of Plenty's Tim Senior talking about weeds Photo: Des Pooley

Woody's Kinohaku capers



Photo: Susan Jones

The students at the tiny Kinohaku School on the edge of the beautiful Kawhia Harbour had been researching weeds on the internet when they got a chance to meet the real thing - Woody Weed came visiting!

Kinohaku School is now working on a great new project to remove weeds on a bank in front of their classrooms and to replant the area with native species.

This little gem comes from one of the winners of the Weedbusters Weedy Art competition held in Hamilton as part of FloravisionNZ 2005.



The Toi Toy Terrier

Hi everybody, hope you have a good day
 I'm a toi toy terrier by the way.
 That pompous pampas poodle thought he'd be
 brought out
 To strut around and spread seeds about.
 His new autumn coat purple and white
 To scoff at me he has no right!
 I flowered in the spring and I'm now old and thin
 Do you like the broom basket mum's put me in?
 I've a ginger ball so I can play
 But I'd rather laze my days away.
 I'm a good dog to own a good dog to keep.
 In my buddleia basket I'll just have a sleep.

- Lois Broad, Te Puke

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

You can go in the monthly draw to win a \$50 Gardening New Zealand voucher.

Simply enter the 'Name This Weed' competition on

www.weedbusters.org.nz



Yellow flag
(*Iris pseudacorus*)



Velvet groundsel
(*Roldana petasitis*)



Blackberry
(*Rubus fruticosus* agg.)



Plectranthus
(*Plectranthus ciliatus*)

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and all regional councils and unitary authorities

To contact Weedbusters:

(0274) 434 431 • info@weedbusters.org.nz • PO Box 4055, Hamilton