



# Weedbusters!

[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)

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First there was the Wellington launch in October last year. Then there was a flurry of media attention with reports of a large blue and purple weed running rampant. Woody Weed, the loveable rogue mascot, had arrived, and Weedbusters is here!

It's been a busy eight months for Weedbusters, and it doesn't look like its going to slow down anytime soon. In fact, the momentum is building all over the country, so weeds better watch out - their days are numbered!



Hon. Chris Carter, Minister of Conservation, escorts Woody Weed from the premises (Photo: Le Roy Taylor)

## Weedbusting From Kataia to the Bluff

All around New Zealand, communities have been slapping on the sunscreen and donning their gumboots to join in the fight against weeds. Some groups have concentrated on working with friends and neighbours to raise awareness about these invasive plants, and others have been getting their hands dirty tackling weeds out in the field.

Department of Conservation and Regional Council weeds staff up and down the country have been spending time helping these Weedbuster groups



Arthur's Pass Weedbusters tackle Russell lupins (Photo: Wayne Costello)

with identification workshops and field demonstrations of weed control methods.

Old foes such as wild ginger (*Hedychium gardnerianum*), Darwin's barberry (*Berberis darwinii*) and tradescantia (*Tradescantia spp.*) have been targeted, as well as relatively new weeds such as Chilean flame creeper (*Tropaeolum speciosum*) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Some of the more colourful community events have involved some of the prettiest weeds. Wanganui-Manawatu Weedbusters were seeing red in their fight against pink ragwort (*Senecio glastifolius*), with seeding plants the main target for control work; and Arthur's Pass Weedbusters tackled the Russell lupins (*Lupinus polyphyllus*) that are damaging the ecology of some of New Zealand's braided rivers.

These are both highly visible weeds due to their good looks, and control projects are sure to encourage debate that will dispel some myths about what sorts of plants become weeds.

**Working together  
to protect New Zealand**

## Red Hot Resources

Need Woody Weed for an upcoming event?

Want some booklets to hand out to Weedbusters in your area?

Proud of the work you are doing and need signs to show it off?

Remember that there are two Woody Weed costumes available for shows, events and other special occasions - guaranteed to impress children, adults, and the media!

For that co-ordinated look, there are also some Weedbusters T-shirts left - limited sizes so be in quick.

There are some other cool Weedbusters resources on their way. In the next couple of months keep an eye out for:

- "Weedbusters at Work" signs
- New "Weedbusting" booklets

Contact Amber Bill, National Weedbusters Co-ordinator, for further information.

# We Are Not Alone!

Think that New Zealand is the only country in the world worried about weeds? Think again. Invasive plant species are one of the most serious threats to global biodiversity, and they are causing problems from Canada to Hawaii, from Asia to Australia, and almost everywhere in between.

Several countries have developed community-based programmes to tackle weed problems. One of the most successful has been South Africa's Working for Water programme. South Africa's main problem is with thirsty exotic plants, such as silky oaks and other large tree species, that are sapping the country of its precious water resources. To tackle this, the Working for Water programme pays local people to get rid of these weed species, and at the same time provides training, employment,

and facilities for the communities involved. People working in weed control in South Africa are known as Weed Warriors, a term that has been adopted in several other countries.

Then, of course, there is Australia, home of the original Woody Weed and the Weedbusters programme. Launched in 1994 as a local event but expanded in the years since to include the whole country, Weedbusters is well and truly entrenched in the Aussie mindset.

Thanks have to go to the Aussie weedos who have been so generous in allowing us to pinch their idea and run with it in New Zealand!



Weedwarriors cartoon courtesy of SANS Parks' Working for Water Programme

## New Zealand Natives in the Spotlight

We often hear about weeds, introduced from overseas, taking over New Zealand's bush, tussocklands or forests.

What we don't hear about are the New Zealand natives successfully invading and over-running corners of other countries.

About 20 of our plant species are problems overseas. New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*) is weedy on Tristan da Cunha, St. Helena, and in Hawaii. Our favourite pohutakawa is unwanted in the *fynbos* botanical region of South Africa. Several sedges are considered weeds in Tasmania. A couple of coprosmas cause problems in Australia, and manuka has invaded Hawaii. *Epilobium nummarifolium* is a nursery weed in Tasmania and the United Kingdom. Native toetoe, ngaire and karaka have invaded parts of Australia or the United States.

In many cases the problem species were originally planted deliberately for one reason or another. It is a good example of what happens when species are shifted around and introduced to new ecosystems in which they thrive.



Pohutukawa: Threatened in New Zealand, a threat in South Africa

## Weedbusters @ Fieldays 16-19 June 2004

Woody Weed will be greeting guests at the National Agricultural Fieldays in the Waikato this year from the comfort of a brand new Weedbusters stand.



The Department of Conservation have organised a large site for Weedbusters that is close to the main access road through Fieldays. This site

will be staffed by weeds people from a variety of agencies.

There are other great Weedbusters events coming your way - check out [www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz) for more details on what's happening in your region.



Photo: Sarah Mankelov

## In the Thick of It...

Welcome to the first issue of *Weedbusters!*, a quarterly newsletter to inspire us all and acknowledge the local heroes and global champions of Weedbusters in New Zealand.

Over summer, I spent three solid days hauling convolvulus out of my back garden – a job that I'm going to be doing either for the rest of my life, or until I move. I am sure that this is a story we can all relate to. But imagine your 'garden' on a bigger scale, like a forest reserve, a wetland, or area of alpine grassland. Now imagine that this 'garden' has been in your family for 100 years and it's your responsibility to pass it, intact, to the next generation...scary stuff.

This is a good analogy for New Zealand's current weed situation, and it's something that regional council biosecurity officers, Department of Conservation rangers, landcare groups and farmers face every day. Just as any weed-infested garden would benefit from a group effort to get rid of invading plants, so would our wider environment - and this is what Weedbusters is all about.

It's been an exciting summer of Weedbusting Days, neighbourhood efforts to keep areas weed-free, and groups showing their willingness to working together to share resources and advice. This is all thanks to the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of you all – and this is just the beginning!

Happy Weedbusting.

**Amber Bill**  
**National Weedbusters Coordinator**

# Taking Care of Business

## The National Weedbusters Management Committee

To be successful in the long term, Weedbusters New Zealand needs a group of people who can drive this initiative at a national level. This group must be representative of the wide range of organisations that are helping get Weedbusters off the ground.

This is the reason the Weedbusters Management Committee was formed eight months ago. Membership includes representatives of the Regional Council Biosecurity Managers' Group, the Department of Conservation, Nursery and Garden Industry Association, the NZ Biosecurity Institute, Protect NZ/Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, joined, of course, by Amber Bill (National Weedbusters Coordinator).

Other people who have been seconded onto the committee when their particular skills have been needed are Lynley Hayes and Chrys Horn (Landcare Research), and Susan Timmins and Anne Brow (DOC).

With the speed with which Weedbusters groups around the country are forming, it is important that a strong foundation is put in place to support this work at a national level. The role of the Management Committee is mainly to take care of the more mundane side of Weedbusters - visions, goals, five-year strategies, and keeping the national programme on track. They will also be responsible for finding the funding to make sure that Weedbusters is here to stay, and is eventually able to operate as a programme independent of any one organisation.



Twelve Go Mad in Christchurch - the first Management Committee meeting, July 2003

*(Back, L-R): Carolyn Lewis (NZBI), Don Ross (Landcare Trust), Jack Crow (Regional Council Biosecurity Managers' Group), Lynley Hayes (Landcare Research), Adrienne Tollemache (Protect NZ/MAF), Susan Timmins (DOC), Gill Robinson (DOC)*

*(Front, L-R): Mike Peters (NZERN), Keith Briden (DOC), Jeremy Kennerly (NGIA), Amber Bill (National Weedbusters Co-ordinator), Ian Popay (DOC)*

## Weedbusters Website Takes Shape



After several months of being linked to the Department of Conservation website, [www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz) will be up and running independently by the end of May 2004.

The designers have been working flat out to create a look that fits in with the Weedbusters theme, and they have come up with something special – gothic, swampy, weedy, while interesting and easy to read.

The different layers for each section are now being developed, and will include...

- national and regional news
- Weedbusters resources
- weed links and contacts
- notices for coming events

...and 'how to' information for everything from controlling weeds to holding a Weedbusters event. Come and have a look once it's up and running - you're sure to be impressed!

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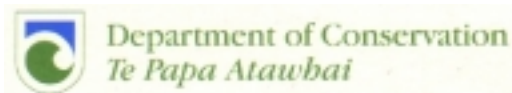
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Proudly part of



Stopping the spread  
of weeds  
[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)



...and all unitary authorities and regional councils