



Weedbusters!

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Northland
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Northland Weedbusters Newsletter

Get your diaries and book these now: Upcoming events

Growsafe course with conservation work in mind 5 February 2010

Sign up for Northtech growsafe trainer, Stewart Peterson's, course on 5th Feb, with further 2010 course dates also available. Stewart has designed this growsafe course with a conservation work focus, so come along and learn all you've always wanted to know about herbicides and their application. The course is free of charge for Weedbusters.

2010 Weedbuster Awards Get those nominations in by the end of March, and look out for an event planned for mid-year!

This is a chance for all weedbusters out there and weed professionals to network, swap knowledge, listen to speakers, join a field trip, and be part of the awards presentation.

Categories for an award are Public land, Private land, Education, Industry/Organisation, and Excellence. In 2008, we had 70 people gathered for speakers and awards. Are you or your group busting weeds in your community? Want to know more?

Contact Gina Williams
gwilliams@doc.govt.nz, 09 470 3331
or go to www.weedbusters.org.nz.

The only Kangaroo acacia in the bay Removed

Thanks to Carl Le Heron for getting rid of this mature kangaroo acacia tree – the only specimen of the prickly species thus far detected in the Bay of Islands.

It is important to eradicate pest plants such as this before they can take hold of landscapes!



Carl Le Heron (Weedbusting) and Heather Taylor (DOC) next to the mature kangaroo acacia tree

The Royal fern hunt



DOC staff inspect a weedy patch of Royal fern

...and other Pouto plant pests

Plant pests in Pouto are under the spotlight this year with the Northland Regional Council blitzing African feather grass, *Pennisetum macrourum*, and DOC set to start work eradicating kangaroo acacia, *Acacia paradoxa*.

January saw an *Osmunda regalis* or Royal fern hunt at Lake Mokeno. DOC staff under thankfully cloudy skies waded through head-high rush and sedge to find this invasive wetland weed. One dense patch of the weed was located and several solo outlier plants pulled out. Follow-up control is planned.

Royal fern is native to Europe, East Asia, India, Africa and America and a great menace in the Waikato. It is also an eradication plant for DOC, strongly discouraged in Northland gardens.

A point of interest - this weedy exotic is of the same plant family, Osmundaceae, as a nationally threatened NZ native fern *Todea barbara*. Sometimes called royal fern, hard todea, or one of the king ferns, *Todea barbara* is an extremely rare streamside plant known from further North in Waipoua forest, Maungataniwha district and Poor Knights. *Todea barbara* has toothed and pointed secondary pinnae. The weedy one, *Osmunda regalis* has narrowly-oblong pinnae with a rounded tip - if you spot either in the wild be sure to get in touch with DOC location information!



RPMS and CPCA's

The Regional Pest Management Strategy has a strong community focus. Northland Regional Council has a range of funding opportunities available for community groups. Check it out at: www.nrc.govt.nz/Resource-Library-Summary/Plans-and-Policies/Pest-management.

Environment Funds, Landcare Group start-up assistance, and Community Pest Control Area applications are assessed on their own merits, with priority given to projects that are sustainable, achievable and in the interest of the environment.

Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum's Peter Coates on a 'Chemically sensitive subject'

Good to see growing awareness and action on the weed problem. Like rust, weeds never sleep, and the cost of doing nothing today becomes exponential tomorrow.

An unfortunate by-product of this weed spray action might be the increasing number of people who are 'chemical sensitive', that is, people whose health is seriously compromised by their vulnerability to many of the herbicides commonly used today. Some of these people are hospitalised after the exposure, which follows, e.g. the spraying of roadsides by Council contractors.

My plea is that weed control is taken seriously. Councils and contractors must ensure that control is effective, and that chemicals are used carefully. Some of the things that concern me include: spraying in windy conditions, neighbours not being notified when spraying is going to occur, spraying 1 - 2 m high foliage, and then mulching sprayed plants before roots have actually died, and a cavalier 'she'll be right' attitude to chemical dosages. Those of us fortunate enough not to be currently 'chemical sensitive' may find our children or grandchildren paying the price for our carelessness.



Tokerau Beach weedbusters

Weedbusters are at work at Karikari Peninsula – an iconic kiwi holiday spot - to reverse the impact of *Melianthus* major, Cape honey flower on the scenic and ecosystem values of the coast and sand dunes.



Soozie McIntyre of the Far North Environment Centre, with Cape honey plants

Tokerau Beach Weedbusters have used loppers rather than herbicide to control Cape honey flower at this popular beach.

The plant stores energy in starchy roots, and root fragments re-grow and sucker. However, the inevitable re-growth after the initial cutting is soft and green, and easily knocked back again with a grubber.

Cape honey flower has soft-wood hollow stems to 2m high and is a weed throughout Australia. In the Far North, it takes over open spaces such as dunes and paddocks. It is smelly and poisonous to stock, and native birds can get sick from the nectar. The seeds are largely spread by water and movement of soil from one place to another, and roots will sucker and re-grow from garden dumping.

For advice on removing Cape honey flower from your favourite beach, and replanting with locally sourced species such as *Muehlenbeckia*, flax and pohutukawa - contact NRC, DOC or the Far North Environment Centre www.ecocentre.co.nz



Alec Morgan with a full trailer load of Cape honey plant seedheads

protecting Northland bush from weeds! Raewyn Honeybone



Ross Johnson (NRC) and Raewyn Honeybone (Weedbuster)

Raewyn Honeybone has an eye for weeds and the vision to transform Maungakaramea by removing local pest plants. Active in raising funds and awareness for forest protection, Raewyn has enjoyed the great NZ outdoors for many years as a trumper. Now she does her bit locally to combat the spread of forest weeds.

She says, "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little"; but throughout the region, individuals and groups are in action. Little bit by little bit, motivated Weedbusters are freeing their patch of Northland roadsides, public and private land. Raewyn has removed privet and kahili ginger from the primary school, local orchards, roadsides and farmland.

Raewyn, like many of you, is part of the expanding NZ-wide Weedbusters, and is keen to catch-up with other weedbusters out there – her contact is 09 4323536.



Herbicides...

More herbicide tips

Evan Ward of DOC Kaitaia came across a useful website when researching the effects of Picloram – and their weed control methods handbook. He suggests it is worth a look just for the detailed info on the environmental fate of the herbicides and how to deal with them:

The Nature Conservancy: <http://www.nature.org/> (the people who have put this all together)

Weed Control Methods Handbook: <http://tncinvasives.ucdavis.edu/handbook.html>

WIMS: <http://tncinvasives.ucdavis.edu/wims.html>

He also points to their Microsoft Access Based database for recording and mapping weed sites that is free and supported, called WIMS. It can be used on a desktop, but can also be used on handheld devices – has anyone had experience with this program? If so, contact Evan.

Herbicide Gel recipe

If you are involved in a conservation project on public conservation land please check with DOC before using chemicals or gel other than that prescribed in your management plan. This gel recipe is provided by Simon Johnson, Habitat Restoration Services, Christchurch.

Ingredients: Liquid herbicide, Psyllium powder, Dye, Water

Use recommended rate of given liquid herbicide (e.g. 5% Tordon, 30% glyphosate). Each of these herbicides needs slightly different quantities of Psyllium to thicken up nicely. To 1 Litre of 30% Glyphosate add about 2 dessertspoons of Psyllium to the water and herbicide) i.e. 300 ml glyphosate, 10 ml dye, 700 ml water). Mix ingredients together before all the water is added as this will leave room for shaking.

Mix again on use. The gel will separate after a few weeks, but still seems to work OK when re-mixed. A detergent pump, supplied from the local commercial-cleaners' warehouse, can be used to move the gel from the mixing container into bottle brushes (only 200ml).

Personal protection equipment should be worn at all times. Make up about 24 hours ahead, and use an over-large container if possible, i.e. 1.5 Litres.

