

Plan your attack on woody weeds

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Bush For Life

Here we are again. The time of the year when the soil is dry and hand pulling weeds will disturb the soil – not to mention the strain on your back!

At this time of year, Bush For Life regional co-ordinators normally will suggest the removal of woody weeds in summer and autumn, when the soil is dry.

But these woody weeds grow all year round, so why focus on these weeds now, when you could terminate them anytime?

Season specific weeds

When it comes to several weed species, time is of the essence.

This is either because they are susceptible at certain times, (as they die back to avoid the drought of summer), or are difficult to find except at certain times of the year (ie. when they are flowering).

These species include:

- Bridal creeper - treatment is best from June to September;
- Monadenia – difficult to see until September to October (when the flower head emerges);
- St Johns' wort – indications are that the 'tongs of death' weed method kills this weed, but it must be upright to be able to use the tongs. This weed can remain prostrate during the earlier stages of its growth cycle. When upright, it is usually also flowering so can be easily located.

Woody weeds

In Bush For Life's formative years, the program often focused on larger woody weeds. However this was sometimes at the expense of the smaller weeds which can be every bit as problematic to the bush.

These days, we know we still need to carefully tackle the larger weeds, but must do so in a way that ensures smaller weeds are also dealt with, even if across smaller areas.

And, as usual, we need to always start the process by dealing from the good bush outwards and work along weed fronts. Make sure that native species will take up the niche made by the removal of the weed species.

For medium sized weeds (ie. up to one metre), the cut and swab method will suffice. This method relies on the herbicide acting in a downward manner only, so make sure the plant is cut as low as possible to the ground before swabbing the stump. This ensures that there is less likelihood of the weed re-shooting. I also like to re-swab the stump after about 10-15 seconds to increase the amount of herbicide absorbed.

Drill and fill method

'Drill and fill' is one of the most efficient ways to kill larger weeds and is now recognised as the best way to kill olives. This is because the herbicide is translocated up into the plant foliage as well as back down into the root system and is the way that Glyphosate is designed to work.

The drill and fill method can also be used on several woody weeds (that are normally considered to be smaller woody weeds in comparison to olives), such as boneseed, cottonbush, broom and Erica amongst many others.

This also leaves the weed standing.

In areas that are overgrazed by kangaroos, the benefit of leaving the weed standing is that the area that has had weeds removed, won't be overgrazed. This tactic has been used with great success on a Barossa Valley site, where kangaroos can occasionally cause damage to regenerating native plants.