

The Bushcarer

Bush For Life
Autumn 2011
Number 6



Bush For Life News

Autumn Edition

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Bush For Life newsletter. We trust you had a happy and safe festive season and are well rested ready for another great year of bushcaring ahead.

So how about that good season...

There has been a lot of talk about the rain we had last year, and most bushcarers would have noticed the effects of 'the good season' on their sites. Conditions were great for the weeds and while the task of managing them might now seem overwhelming, it is worth considering a few points about the natives.

Although 2010 was a good year for weeds, the locals also had a fair go. Many indigenous plants produced bumper crops of seeds and conditions for germination from the seed bank were ideal. Seedling survival rates are expected to be good due to the cooler, wetter summer.

So when you are out on your site this year, or at a group activity, remember to keep a look out for native seedlings, and help them out by clearing any weeds smothering them. This will also make them more visible, so that they won't be accidentally damaged in areas to be sprayed or slashed. If you are not sure whether a



seedling is a weed or not, please ask your Regional Coordinator to identify it for you first.

Thank You!

We would like to say a big thank you to all who returned their Bush For Life 2010 End of Year Questionnaires. The results have again been extremely positive and we are very pleased to confirm that BFL site carers and group activity participants, have given more than 35,900 hours of their time to the program, totalling over a million dollars worth of on-ground works for the second year in a row; an amazing and admirable effort.

The questionnaire was also an opportunity for you to tell us what you want and need from the program, and we thank you very much for your open and honest feedback. We greatly value the thoughts of those volunteering with the program and encourage the ongoing communication between you, your regional coordinators and staff in the Trees For Life office.

Get involved in National Pest Surveillance

Biosecurity SA (a division of Primary Industries and Resources SA) is responsible for the prevention, eradication and management of invasive pests, weeds and disease in South Australia. The general public are being encouraged get involved in *Biosecurity SA National Pest Surveillance 2011* by calling the Emergency

Plant Pests hotline number 1800 084 881 to report any suspect exotic pests.

Awareness sheets for South Australia's targeted pests are available on the Biosecurity SA website at www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa.

Missing Drill

We are missing drill number 30. If you are in possession of it please contact Randall on 8406 0544.

Cover photos from top to bottom:
Arthropodium strictum, *Drosera whittakeri*, *Grevillea lavandulacea*

Contact us

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If you would like to help us save paper by receiving this by email, please let us know.

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You are one of over 700 bushcarers actively managing more than 300 Bush For Life sites encompassing more than 3400ha of bushland in South Australia

Identification and Control of Buckthorn

By Peter Watton

BFL Operations Manager (South)

Rhamnus alaternus, more commonly called buckthorn or blow-fly bush, is a reasonably widespread environmental weed in south eastern Australia, including the greater Mt Lofty Ranges and Yorke Peninsula. It is a member of the Rhamnaceae family, which also includes the native *Cryptandra*, *Pomaderris* and *Spyridium* species.

Buckthorn was introduced to Australia from the Mediterranean region as an ornamental plant for hedges and gardens. It subsequently escaped into woodland and coastal vegetation, generally where the annual rainfall exceeds 500mm. Buckthorn grows on a range of soil types in full sun or part shade and tolerates drought, cold spells and windy or exposed conditions.

Appearance

- Can develop into a large shrub, up to 5 m tall, with a dense canopy and stems branching from ground level
- Leathery leaves 2.0-7.5 cm long, and mostly alternate along the stems. Dark green above and paler below, with prominent veins and finely toothed margins.
- Flowers occur in small clusters in winter to early spring. Yellow-green and 3-4

mm in diameter, star-shaped with five petals. Scented but fairly inconspicuous.

- Fruits are round, 5-7 mm in diameter, starting out red and turning black as they mature in summer.

The problem

Buckthorn is fast growing and resists being destroyed by intense fires and it resprouts strongly from its base and thick lateral roots when its stems are cut. The vigorous growth and dense shade that it produces can prevent the regeneration of native trees and shrubs. It alters the composition of the ground flora and can change the structural composition of vegetation associations.

How it spreads

Buckthorn reproduces mainly by seed. Fruiting is prolific over summer on mature plants and the berries may be dispersed by birds and other animals or through dumped garden waste. Plants are often found growing at the base of trees where birds have perched and voided the seed.

How to get rid of it

Buckthorn is a challenging weed to manage, due to its ability to resprout from cut stems and roots and its ease of dispersal back into bushland.

Where to start: As with all bush regeneration work, start by treating outliers in the best bush first and then work towards the more degraded areas. Where this weed has formed a large thicket, it should be cleared gradually, allowing natural regeneration to reclaim the space and keeping further weed



Buckthorn fruit

Buckthorn forming a dense thicket in bushland

invasions manageable.

Clearing a large area all at once may result in lots of follow-up work, as colonising weeds take advantage of the increased light and space.

Hand weeding: Seedlings can generally be hand weeded if the soil is moist. If they do not pull out easily, do not persist as the stem will break off and the plant will resprout from the taproot. A useful tool to assist with hand removal is an old pair of pliers, which can grip the base of the stem and be used to lever the plant out of the ground.

Drill and fill: If the buckthorn is large enough to drill and fill, this technique should always be used in preference to cut and swab. This achieves a better kill rate on larger woody weeds and does not trigger the resprouting response that cutting and swabbing may create. More herbicide is absorbed into the plant, which is then transported throughout its root and branch network.

Drilling and filling also reduces the the need to remove large quantities of cut branches which can result in trampling and damage to the surrounding bushland.

Cut and swab: The cut and swab technique can be used if the buckthorn is too large to hand weed but too small to drill and fill. Cut the stem close to the ground and immediately apply Glyphosate to the exposed stump using a swabber. If not applied immediately the absorption and effectiveness of herbicide is reduced as some weeds begin sealing wounds within seconds. When treating

buckthorn swab the cut stem a second time to get more herbicide into the weed.

Trim any foliage that was removed into 30-60 cm lengths and spread on the ground rather than piling it up. This aids decomposition and reduces tripping hazards. It also allows native plants to grow up through the cut material.

Contact your regional coordinator for further details about the drill and fill or cut and swab techniques, herbicide rates or equipment.

Native look-alikes

The following features can be used to differentiate these native 'look-alike' species:

- *Alyxia buxifolia* (sea box): leaves paired with rounded tips and less than 4 cm long. Flowers are solitary and white.

- *Adriana quadripartite* (syn. *A. klotzschii*, coast bitterbush): leaves are paired, white underneath and have wavy edges. Stems are hairy and whitish.

- *Myoporum viscosum* (sticky boobialla): sticky plant with alternate leaves that are 2-11 cm long, sharp pointed with small teeth along the margins. White flowers with purple spots.

As always, if unsure of identification, ask your regional coordinator.

References

Department for Environment and Heritage 2006 *Environmental Weeds of the South East, Buckthorn – Rhamnus alaternus Fact Sheet* www.environment.sa.gov.au



Buckthorn flowers

Buckthorn seedlings suitable for hand weeding

Keep Slashing Annual Grasses

By Alex Coombe

BFL Operations Manager (North)

Annual weed grasses are an enemy that many bushcarers battle in the front line of bushcare. Annuals respond quickly to soil disturbance, suitable weather and a lack of competition. They produce large quantities of seed that can soon dominate a seedbank. Native grasses, which are perennial, can be outcompeted unless the weed grasses are controlled.

You may have noticed oats or other annual grasses quickly establish in areas where competition has been reduced (e.g. through woody weed control) or where soil has been disturbed (e.g. by animals or vehicles).

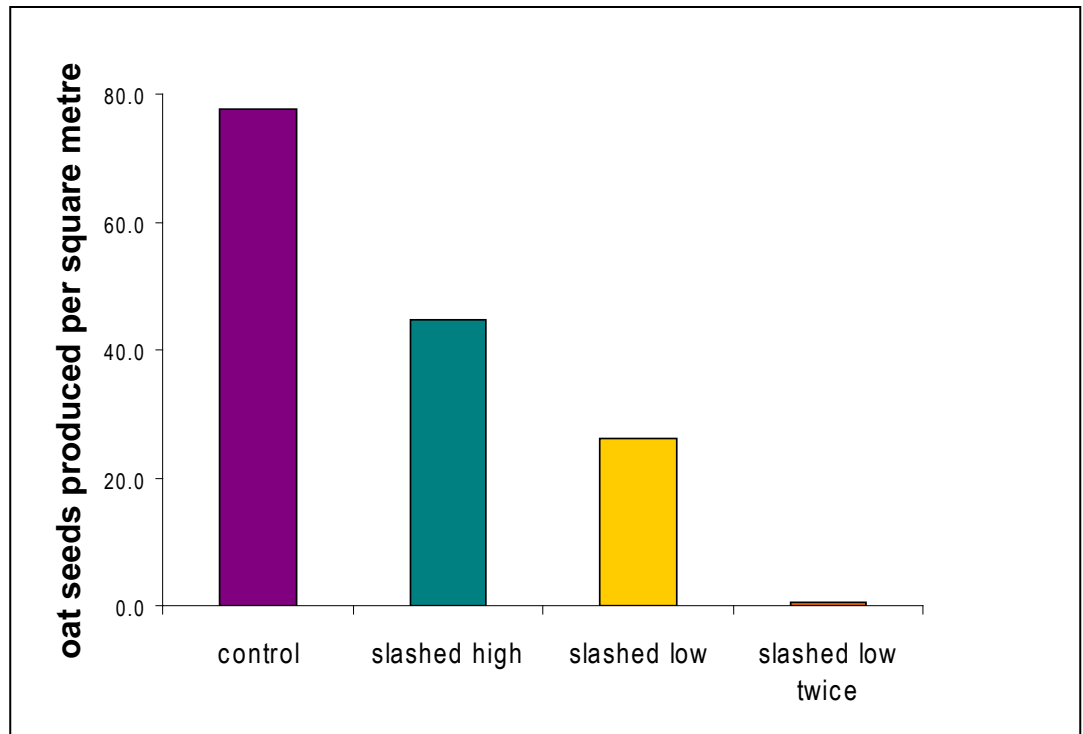
Bush For Life has been running Brushcutter Training Workshops for the last 10 years to train volunteers to manage annual weed grasses. Using a brushcutter enables grasses to be managed on a broader scale than is possible with hand weeding and hedge shears.

Slashing Regime Trials

Research was undertaken in October and November 2010 to quantify the benefit of annual grass slashing on three Bush For Life sites; Auldana North, Stonemine South and Carclew Grassland. High rainfall and late onset of hot weather made 2010 an excellent year for oats (*Avena spp.*), which are perhaps the worst annual grass for bushcarers in SA. 120 grids were marked out with coloured pegs and the weeds in the grids were treated with 4 different slashing regimes:

- no slashing (control)
- slashed once – high
- slashed once - ground level
- slashed twice - ground level

In each case slashing was conducted immediately prior to the opening of flowers.



Results

The results show that slashing the first set of flower heads (slashed high) reduced seed production by over a third. When a single slash was conducted at ground level instead (slashed low), seed production was reduced by another third (figure 1).

It is clear to see that even slashing an area once reduces the annual grass seed production in that area significantly. This is positive news for bushcarers who have limited time for slashing, and for those who have missed the opportunity to follow up after an initial slashing effort. This is an important first step in keeping annual grass populations in check.

The trial has also shown that following up your work with a second slash, prior to the opening of the second set of flowers, dramatically reduces seed production by 99%! By slashing off the flowers the weeds have no chance to produce seed; another illustration of the value of following up on your weed work. By re-treating weeds before they could adequately recover, the seed production of oats in these areas was virtually halted.

Conclusion

If annual grasses like oats, brome, and annual veldt threaten the best bush on your site, then a small amount of slashing, working from the best bush outward, can be beneficial to their control. Slashing is particularly valuable in supporting your spot regeneration efforts in small areas. Reducing the seedbank of annuals along a weed front reduces their ability to spread into the best areas and out compete healthy natives. Remember to focus your work strategically, helping protect the best bush and encouraging its spread. Slashing in degraded areas that have a lower chance of regeneration is a less valuable use of your limited time.

Slashing on Your Site

If you think your site could benefit from slashing then please talk to your regional coordinator. BFL provides TAFE SA accredited training in using and maintaining brushcutters, so call Volunteer Coordinator Emma on 8406 0500 to book in. BFL also have a supply of brushcutters that you can borrow for use on your BFL site.

While regional coordinators

are able to assist you with the slashing, unfortunately they are simply unable to get to all BFL sites at the optimum time for slashing (just prior to the opening of flowers). Therefore, the bushcarers on each site are best situated to monitor the growth stage of annual grasses on their BFL sites and, if possible, do the slashing themselves.

Regional coordinators may be able to arrange brushcutting miniBATs to help you get your slashing done at the best time, or if you are unable to manage all the slashing on your site. This is also a great opportunity to improve your skills under the helpful gaze of experienced volunteers and trained staff. Another alternative is to partner up with another trained volunteer and help on each other's sites.

This project was funded by the Native Vegetation Council's research grant. We also thank Burnside and Playford councils for hosting this research, as well as the bushcarers who continue to request information about weed management issues on their sites. If you have weed management questions please raise them with your regional coordinator.

Immanuel Drive, Northern Foothills - Volunteers Needed



Salisbury Heights - 19.5km north east of Adelaide

New site perfect for power tools!

This *new* site, situated on a grassy hillside with a canopy of Mallee Box, is a perfect match for that special someone with a love of power tools and a dislike of olive trees and boxthorn. The site is quiet and secluded, adjacent to a creek line, and would be well suited to someone who prefers the action of drilling and filling.

Immanuel Drive awaits a special kind of bushcarer so sign up now to get your fill of drilling, and when the drill gets tiresome, there is also the potential for some brushcutting.

The Regional Coordinator Ginenne Eylander will be able to guide you in the techniques and use of equipment that this site requires. All tools will be supplied so all you need to bring along is your enthusiasm.

If you would like to know more about the site or if you are interested in helping out please contact the Bush For Life Volunteer Coordinator on 8406 0542, or email bfli@treesforlife.org.au.

Trees For Life

Bush For Life Program

Sauerbier Creek Corridor - Volunteers Needed



Aberfoyle Park - 16km south of Adelaide

Unique suburban patch needs some love

Easily accessible by bike, bus or car, Sauerbier Creek is a small suburban bushcare site that needs some regular love.

The site is one of the few remaining *Banksia marginata* (silver banksia) woodlands left in the Adelaide region. Alongside the banksias, the upperstorey vegetation is made up of sheoaks, acacias, eucalypts, tea-trees, hop bushes and native cherries. In the understorey the vegetation community is completed with orchids, muntries, sundews, guinea-flowers, lilies, native grasses, sedges and rushes.

Perennial grasses, exotic bulbs, pincushion and ribwort are the priority management problems. Regional co-ordinator, Jenna Currie, can guide you with minimal disturbance techniques to improve and restore this corridor for native fauna. If you would like to know more or if you are interested in helping out please contact the Bush For Life Volunteer Coordinator on 8406 0542, or email bfli@treesforlife.org.au

Trees For Life

Bush For Life Program

Member Open Days to Celebrate TFL's 30th Birthday

Have you heard that Trees For Life is celebrating it's 30th birthday this year? Staff are busy planning a full schedule of events and activities for the year ahead which you will be able to read about in *ReLeaf* magazine's special '30th birthday' news.

Along with other TFL Member Open Days, the Bush For Life team will be holding two open days on BFL sites to showcase the work of our dedicated and hard working bushcarers to other members of TFL.

These Member Open Days will be held at **Mandilla Reserve** in Flagstaff Hill on Sunday 17 July and **Yantaringa Reserve** in Hahndorf on

Sunday 11 September. On both days activities will begin at 2:00pm with a special guided site tour.

At **Mandilla Reserve** the long-time carers, Geoff and Barbara Moss, will be welcoming TFL members to their site to showcase their remarkable achievements over that past 15 years. There will also be an opportunity for willing people to get their hands dirty and take part in a community tree planting in a buffer area on the site.

At **Yantaringa Reserve** the dedicated site carers will be showcasing their beautiful



Mandilla Reserve



Yantaringa Reserve

Adelaide Hills site and their collective bushcaring efforts to members.

We are sure that you will be interested and inspired to hear the stories of these Bushcarers and see two great example of the huge difference minimal disturbance bush regeneration can make.

More details of these and other events will feature throughout the year in *ReLeaf* magazine. For more information or to register you interest in attending please call the office on 8406 0500, or email info@treesforlife.org.au

Supporters:

The Bush For Life program is supported by the South Australian Government through the Adelaide & Mt. Lofty Ranges NRM Board, the Murray Darling Basin NRM Board, and the Native Vegetation Council; participating local governments & corporate landholders, and Trees For Life members and donors.



Adelaide & Mt. Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board

