

Season's Greetings

Deck the Halls with boughs of Ochna, tra-la-la-la-la . . . and burn the seeds.

Are weeds really an issue?

Some recent studies and discussions have pointed out that weeds can actually benefit the environment by adding soil nutrients and lifting ground water etc. Peter Andrews has promoted this and many other innovative techniques for restoring degraded farmland — his results have been proven.

But many of us working to restore and protect large areas of native bushland might have more to add to the debate. For example there are several exotic vine and tree species that can invade pristine wilderness with devastating effects on biodiversity. Clearly some weeds are worse than others.

Vines such as Cat's Claw and Moth Vine have seed that can be carried long distances by the wind, while Madeira Vine and Morning Glory can regrow from tiny fragments of the plant carried by machinery or even walking boots and clothing. Each has the ability to climb and completely smother the forest, including large trees, often collapsing the canopy and blanketing the understorey.

Large Leaf Privet is spread by birds and can germinate in dense rainforest, quickly out-competing understorey plants and forming dense thickets. It is also very difficult to detect, as it closely resembles other native rainforest species until fully mature. Chinese Elm, although not as shade tolerant, can spread prolifically and quickly choke open forest, rainforest margins and watercourses.

Kahili Ginger and Broad Leaf Paspalum are also weeds that can form large monocultures, completely overrunning smaller native plants and groundcovers.

So, although certain 'weeds' (usually small herbaceous annuals) can be used to restore degraded land to some extent, there is no doubt there are several exceptions. Other similar mountainous areas such as Maleny/Montville, Tamborine and Springbrook have very heavy infestations of several of these species. Fortunately, Mt Glorious and Mt Nebo have far fewer, largely due to the smaller settlements and active community groups, residents and government agencies. So next time someone tells you, "weeds are our friends", tell them, "not always".

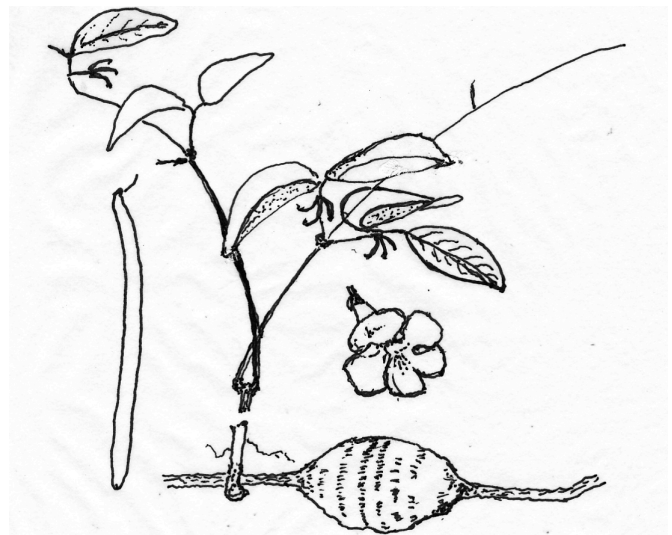
Alan Carter

A seriously dangerous weed

Cat's Claw Creeper (*Class 3 Declared Weed*)

You may have noticed yellow flowers in the treetops in the vicinity of Fahey Road, Mt Glorious Road, at Mt Nebo, Highvale and throughout Brisbane. This is Cat's Claw Creeper, a very destructive vine, which has potential to destroy large tracts of native forest.

An infestation produces masses of stems which climb up tree trunks by means of 3-pronged tendrils (the 'cat's claws', emerging from underneath the leaves, and thus hard to see). The vine smothers the canopy, breaking branches, cutting out sunlight and eventually killing trees. It has tubers on the roots, which can grow bigger than large potatoes; these suck moisture and nutrients from the soil.



The invasion of this plant is a great worry. A large infestation on a site at Mt Glorious has spread, by means of its paper-like winged seed from the long thin pod, down Fahey Road and into the forest. It is also growing in at least two sites at Mt Nebo.

Help is needed to identify any other sites where you think this plant is growing. Please ring Dominic 3289-0093 or Maggie 3289-8175 and we can work out a strategy for dealing with it together.

Maggie Scattini

Native Grass in roundabout

The grass growing in the roundabout at Mt Nebo is Tussock Grass. It forms a strong clump and grows to about 1 metre high. It makes a good ground cover in moist areas at higher altitudes like Mt Nebo and Mt Glorious. The seeds attract birds and its tussocky habit makes it good habitat for small animals.

It is easy to grow if you just collect some of the seed which is mature now.

Its botanical name is *Poa labillardieri* named after Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardiere who was a French naturalist. He was on the expedition with Bruni d'Entrecasteaux when they were searching for the lost La Prouse expedition.

They visited Van Diemen's land as Tasmania was then called and Labillardiere collected many plant specimens. While they were away the French Revolutionaries cut off the head of Louis XVI and declared France to be a Republic. England declared war on France so that on the way home all Labillardiere's 4000 specimens were confiscated by an English commander. They were later returned to him because of his friendship with Joseph Banks.

There have been over 100 plants named after him. A vine with edible fruits growing in the bush around here is called *Billardiera scandens*.

Maggie Scattini

Gardening in the Mountains

Spring rains

When rain is around, it is planting time! The early rains this year have been an added bonus and it has not been too hot for working in the garden.

Spring has been a great time for clearing those weeds that are in danger of spreading, particularly in the summer with more rain predicted. Also the soft, moist soil has allowed most weeds to be hand pulled without the use of chemicals. (*For safety procedure when using chemicals contact MEPA*).

Where weeds have been removed and soil has been disturbed, more weeds will regrow if the area is not mulched well and replanted with appropriate plants.

By choosing local (*indigenous*) species, plants will establish very easily and require little further attention. When making your choice, observe where the plants are growing in the wild and plant in similar conditions. (i.e. sun, shade, moist, well drained etc.) Remember also that some can grow into large trees and could become a problem in the future.

Suitable plants can be obtained from places such as:

- Greening Australia, 57 Paten Road, The Gap,
- Pine Rivers Community Nursery,
15 Bunya Pine Court, Eatons Hill,

who source much of their seed from our area. This gives the plant 'local provenance' and therefore the added advantage of being adapted to our conditions. Or contact Wendy (3289 0280) for suggestions for plants to suit your site.

As mentioned before, it is not advisable to plant just any Australian native as they can become weedy when their habitat is changed. An example of this is our local *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum) which is a problem weed in southern states of Australia.

Finally, replicate the forest and mulch the plants well to retain soil moisture, provide nutrients and prevent erosion. If possible retain some natural areas with features such as hollow logs and rocks etc. for the protection of our local wildlife. Also by not altering the landscape too much, natural drainage patterns are retained and this will assist with excess water flow if the rain continues as predicted. A sudden deluge can cause erosion, however, swales can help slow down the run off and allow for absorption.

Wendy Lees

Do your block! Free bushcare service

Would you like some assistance managing bushland on your block? Advice on weeds or advice on planting local native plants in your garden?

MEPA has a free service offering advice and information (supported by MBRC)

Contact Maggie - 3289 8175 or
Dominic - 3289 0093 or
Email: askmepa@yahoo.com.au