

METHODS OF WEED CONTROL

A variety of methods can be used to control noxious weeds. The method you choose will be determined by the size of the problem, the resources you have available and the time constraints you are working to.

To effectively control any weed a combination of methods is generally desirable. This approach is called Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

1. Manual / Mechanical Removal

When the size and location of the infestation permits, labour intensive methods such as hand pulling and mattocking can be undertaken. These methods are best achieved when plants are young and infestations small. When bushes or infestations become larger however they may be best controlled through the strategic use of appropriate machinery such as tractor or dozer. Slashing or burning may also be used to open up dense stands of weeds provided follow-up control by other techniques is undertaken.

If spraying is to be undertaken following mechanical control it will be essential to wait until regrowth is at least 0.5 m in height and in full leaf. Spraying earlier than this may be less effective as regrowth may not support enough leaf to absorb sufficient chemical to kill the plant.

2. Herbicides

Herbicides applied at the right time, right rate and using the right technique are often the most economical, effective and most practical method for long term control.

Weeds should only be treated with chemicals registered for their control and when they are actively growing and **not** suffering undue stress, such as drought. Chemicals are most commonly applied by foliar spray application, cut stump or stem injection methods.

3. Biological

The majority of noxious weeds have been introduced from other countries including the America's, Europe, Asia and Africa. Their natural enemies, which kept them under control in their native country, are not present in Australia and as a consequence their spread has been unrestricted.

Much work has been done on the introduction of biological control agents for Blackberry, Bitou Bush and St Johns Wort, to name a few. Biological control does not eradicate a weed species, but aims to suppress their growth, flowering and seed-set, thereby slowing the rate of spread of the weed.

Biological control is most practical in inaccessible areas, low priority areas for control and where other control options are too expensive or ineffective.

4. Replacement

After mechanical treatment or herbicide application it is often valuable to seed pasture or regenerate with native plants. This helps prevent further weed establishment from seed or root stock by providing competition.

Planning Your Actions

Once a weed is effectively controlled by any of the above-prescribed methods be prepared to implement follow up control and maintenance on an annual basis over several years. Regrowth from root stock or seeds will often occur and if not controlled at least annually the initial expense and time will have been wasted and the weed will re-establish.