

Landcare after the fires: Opportunities for weed control

After the fires, weeds can become issues requiring attention in the first few years after the fire. However, fires also create opportunities to deal with some of the big weed issues for landholders. Plan NOW to capitalise on the opportunity.



This information sheet includes principles applicable to most properties affected by fire, but includes details and actions specific to fire areas on the northern side of Melbourne in 2014.

Weed control can be very effective after fire

Weeds will also flourish after fire – but the fire has provided a window of opportunity to deal with some of our persistent weed problems. Thick patches of weeds have been thinned out, including gorse and blackberries, so weeds are more accessible. And weeds recovering after fire are very vulnerable to control activities.

Weeds relevant to the fire area north of Melbourne include:

Gorse, Broom, Tree Lucerne and other woody weeds will have been thinned out by the fire but will sprout and germinate *en masse* after fire. This means that a large proportion of the seed bank in the soil will become vulnerable to control over late Spring and Summer.

Blackberry patches will have been thinned and are now more accessible, but will soon regrow from reserves in the roots. We just need to wait until it is actively growing and has lots of new leaf area in Summer 2014/15, and then hit it.

Serrated Tussock: a hot fire will not kill adult plants, but will remove biomass and about 25% of the seed bank. Fire stimulates mass germination. This is an opportunity to remove regrowing adult plants and seedlings, and break the cycle of seed production. Contact a Landcare or a local agency for advice and assistance on control of Serrated Tussock.

Chilean and Texas Needle-grass will also survive the fire, but the new growth will be more susceptible to control.

Annual weeds will make use of the bare ground to proliferate: thistles and grasses may proliferate. Protection of the perennial pasture species will allow them to compete and displace these annuals over the next few years.

Note:

1. Indiscriminate use of herbicides will affect desirable species and delay the recovery of the pasture or bushland. Herbicides should be target-specific and used strategically as part of integrated weed control programs.
2. After fire, you will see many unusual species, such as native fireweeds (*Senecio* species) and Kangaroo Apple and introduced Black Nightshade (both *Solanum* species), that respond to the post-fire conditions. They are usually harmless and will disappear over time. If in doubt, contact your Landcare facilitator or a local agency - they may ask you to email a photograph or bring in a bagged sample for identification.

New weeds may emerge after the fire

Bare and disturbed ground encourages weeds. Fodder brought in from elsewhere may carry new weeds.

Protecting the land

Do not use hay near bush areas to feed wildlife; weeds may spread into the bushland.

Use fodder in confined areas, such as yards or stock containment areas; do not spread fodder from unknown sources out over the paddock. Mark areas where fodder was used for future reference as weeds (from the fodder) may emerge in these areas.

Monitor for weeds, particularly in disturbed sites and feed areas, and check out the identity of any unknown weeds. Contact Landcare or a local natural resource management agency for help with identification and advice. They may ask for a good quality photographs of your unknown weeds to be emailed, or for a bagged specimen, so that they can accurately identify your weeds.

For more information on weeds:

For information on weed identification and control in pasture and bushfire recovery the following websites have useful resources:

www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds

<http://www.weeds.org.au/>

www.serratedussock.com/sites/default/files/serrated.pdf

For more information on fire recovery north of Melbourne:

<http://www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/for-land-managers/bushfire-recovery-resources-for-landholders>

www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/council/news-media-notices/news-updates/information-fire-affected-farmers-animals.html

Landcare in conjunction with other natural resource management agencies is organising a series of information sessions and workshops on care of soils, pastures and bushland, revegetation and weed management. Landcare is also seeking funding and support for internal fencing to protect bushland, pastures and waterways, and for revegetation works within fire areas. Watch out for details or lodge an “Expression of Interest” with your Landcare facilitator (below).

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