Since our last edition of Weed All About It, the NT Weed Management Branch has wrapped up its participation in the Show Circuit Bonanza!

Throughout the months of July and August, Extension Coordinator for the Weed Management Branch, Alison Derry, took weed information to six shows. These included:

- Alice Springs Show 6th/7th/8th July
- Katherine Rural Show – 20th/21st/22nd July
- Darwin Show – 27th/28th/29th July
- NT Garden and Nursery Spectacular – 11th/12th August
- Science Week – 22nd August
- Boat Show – 25th/26th August

Left to right: Hon Kon Vatskalis, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Robert Knight - Member for Daly, Alice Beilby, Susan King, Charlie Holzwart and Gary Hillen at the launch of the Katherine Weed ID Deck
Thank you to those in the Weed Management Branch who volunteered their time at these shows. The local community got behind us and came along to find out information on weed identification and control, as well as to chat to weed officers about any weed problems they had on their properties. The focus of these information days was to provide local information and advice on weeds relevant to the particular region. These included distributing new regional weeds posters at each of the regional shows as well as the formal launch of the Katherine Weed ID Deck. For more information please contact 8999 4567 or visit www.nt.gov.au/weeds.

Alison Derry
Extension Coordinator
October 2007

Lord of the Weeds Competition

‘Lord of the Weeds’ is a national secondary schools competition run by the Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weeds Management (Weeds CRC) in conjunction with the NT Weed Management Branch. The competition offered Australian schools the chance to share in almost $5000 in prize money.

234 school groups participated in the 2007 competition. Registration was required by the end of February and reports handed in at the end of May 2007. Student reports for the ‘Lord of the Weeds’ competition tell exciting stories of the satisfying work in which school students are currently involved, or are planning, to rehabilitate weed infested areas.

The success of the competition continues to grow and for the first time the Northern Territory Government topped up the total prize money in 2007 by offering the winning Territory school the chance to win $200.

Student reports promote the message that rehabilitating local areas is both worthwhile and satisfying. Students investigate a weed-infested area and then write a report addressing key criteria such as a detailed explanation of why the weed is a problem, what management strategies exist for the weed and the merits of this management strategy.

Students had a number of weeds to choose from ranging from lantana spp. in the Top End to buffel grass (Cenchrus ciliaris) in the Alice Springs region. Four schools entered the Lord of the Weeds Competition in the Northern Territory with most participants coming from the southern region. Alice Springs High School won the NT competition with a detailed report on the weed problems in the school agriculture plot.

The NT Weed Management Branch would like to congratulate all students involved in the project at Alice Springs High School and would like to encourage other schools to participate in the competition in years to come.

Jenny Deveraux, Royal Darwin Show

Hilary Tagell and Alison Derry, Alice Springs Show

Alice Springs High School’s agriculture plot
Athel pine control along Finke River

A recent injection of Federal funding for the control of athel pine along the Finke River has enabled bulldozers to remove the last remaining core infestations of this weed of national significance from Horseshoe Bend Station.

Although there are significant levels of athel pine in the lower reaches of the catchment, Horseshoe Bend Station had by far the largest and most dense infestation of athel pine along the entire length of the Finke River catchment.

The removal of the densest core infestation of athel pine (up to 30 km long) from this section of the river is seen as a major milestone for the program which has been ongoing for the last 12 years.

A brief survey of the sections of the river immediately downstream from where the bulldozers finished off this year indicated significant amounts of dieback occurring in dense infestations of athel pine.

Bio-control from Darwin are planning a trip to the region in the near future to gather samples of the dead and dying plants to try and ascertain what the causal agent is.

This is the first time such dieback has been recorded in Australia and it is hoped it will continue to have an impact on the species in lower uncontrolled sections of the catchment.

Alternative control options to be investigated include conducting aerial application trials of herbicide (active ingredient imazapyr) on dense infestations along some sections of the Finke River.

A 90 per cent success rate has been achieved on a closely related Tamarisk spp. in the U.S. using imazapyr for aerial spraying Tamarisk in riparian areas. If successful this technique may prove to be more cost effective and less intrusive than bulldozing large stands of the species.

CDEP participants from Tjitjikala community, who have a history of assisting the Weed Management Branch with the follow up control program in the upper reaches of the Finke River, have once again become involved in control efforts in the upper reaches of the river this year. Their assistance with the control program is greatly appreciated.
NRETA Weed Management Branch recently hosted the Barkly Technical Prickle Bush Workshop.

The workshop was funded through the Natural Heritage Trust and was a follow on from the Barkly Regional Prickle Bush Workshop held at Helen Springs station in August 2005.

The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness of the three prickle bush species that impact on the Barkly region – prickly acacia, mesquite and parkinsonia. Guest speakers included Nathan March (National Coordinator), Steve Wingrave (Principal Weeds Officer), Debbie Mullin (Spatial Data Manager), Alex Pickburn (Central Land Council (CLC), Aboriginal Ranger Group Coordinator) and Naomi Diplock (PhD student, University of Queensland).

Identification, threat and potential impact of prickle bushes were discussed and the current distribution of these species in the Barkly was highlighted. The workshop was also an opportunity for the CLC ranger group to present their capabilities and future plans. The newly developed NT Weed Data Collection Guidelines were presented – this package will lead to a uniform approach to collecting weed mapping data in the Territory. And finally, Naomi Diplock discussed ongoing parkinsonia dieback research.

Day two of the workshop was a field day at Rockhampton Downs station where participants practiced identification techniques and refined their chemical treatment skills. This was a very busy day with each species being identified in the field and everyone participating in a ‘have a go’ session at treating mesquite with quad bikes and chemical spray equipment. Weed Management Branch would like to extend a big thank you to Rockhampton Downs for their commitment and assistance on the day.

The workshop was well attended with representatives from Helen Springs and Avon Downs stations and the CLC ranger Group. Weed Management staff from Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs regions also attended to increase their knowledge of these species. It is hoped that future workshops will be organised at more suitable times of the year to further increase pastoralist participation.

The key point illustrated in the workshop is that presently there are only low level infestations of mesquite and prickly acacia in the Barkly; therefore they should be eradicated from the region before their potential impact is realised. Recently Weed Management Branch won Defeating the Weeds Menace funding to deliver a Territory wide project to kick start the eradication process of these species. The project Working Towards the eradication of Prickly acacia and Mesquite from the Northern Territory starts in July and will see cooperation between all stakeholders; NRETA Weed Management, Aboriginal ranger groups and pastoralists. This is an exciting project that aims to treat all known infestations of mesquite and prickly acacia in the Northern Territory.
**Description**

*Limnocharis flava*, native to South America, is an anchored aquatic weed. It is an erect clump-forming herb that can reach 1 m in height. Limnocharis has rounded leaf blades on fairly thick triangular stems. The stunning yellow 3-lobed flowers occur on an octopus-like inflorescence, with up to 15 flowers, on a triangular shaped stem. The spherical capsules produced after flowering split into crescent-shaped pieces which contain numerous small brown seeds. Both the mature fruit and individual segments float for some time and are able to be distributed by running water.

Limnocharis has the ability to act as a perennial where a distinct dry season occurs. It can also reproduce both vegetatively and by seed. Vegetative plantlets develop from the central inflorescence and break off and either float away or root down in the mud near the base of the plant.

**The problem**

Limnocharis colonises shallow wetlands and margins of deeper waterways. This aquatic plant is considered to be a major weed in many countries. In Asia, limnocharis hinders agricultural production by infesting rice paddies, irrigation channels and drainage ditches. In the United States, limnocharis threatens the biodiversity of the Florida Everglades by displacing native flora and fauna. Limnocharis also present serious agricultural and biodiversity threats to Australia.

**Distribution and potential spread in Australia**

Limnocharis was first introduced into Australia in 2001. At present, infestations are found only in northern Queensland. However, there is potential for limnocharis to establish in northern regions of Western Australia and Northern Territory and the northern and coastal regions of Queensland and New South Wales. Limnocharis, in Australia, has been spread by gardeners.

**Current Status**

A national cost shared eradication program commenced in 2001. There are currently 17 recorded infestations of limnocharis, although only three are defined as active.

**Declaration details**

In Queensland, limnocharis is a Class 1 Declared Plant in the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. Similarly, in NSW, they are listed as W1 (notifiable weeds). These declarations mean it is an offence to spread and sell these plants and they must be destroyed where found.

**Further information**

If you think you have found this plant please contact Travis Sydes (Land Protection Officer) on (07) 4064 1144 or 0428 111 713, or Dr Kylie Galway (Project Coordinator) on (07) 4064 1185.

More information is available online at: [www.nrm.qld.gov.au/pests/weeds/declared plants](http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/pests/weeds/declared plants)
The National Mimosa Management Committee was reformed in July 2007 and held a teleconference in early August.

From 23rd to 25th October the committee met in Darwin at Berrimah Farm. The committee oversees the implementation of the National Mimosa Strategic Plan 2000 with the vision of “Protecting Australia from the adverse impacts of Mimosa pigra and restoring infested natural habitats and productive lands and waters”.

During the meeting our acting Chair, Alice Beilby from NRETA (A/Director Weed Management Branch) handed over to Jim Forwood who now takes on the role of community Chair. Jim has extensive experience not only in mimosa management but also as a member of numerous NRM committees at both the national and NT level. Organisations represented on the committee are NRETA (Weed Management Branch, Steve Wingrave and Parks, Barry Scott), NT DPIF (Arthur Cameron), NT Cattleman’s Association (Tony Searle), NT Local Government Association (Jaemie Page), WA Department of Agriculture and Food (Noel Wilson), QLD DPI & F Biosecurity Queensland (Joe Vitelli), Department of Environment and Water Resources (Robyne Leven), CSIRO Entomology (Tim Heard) and the National Weeds Management Facilitator (John Thorp). The Executive Officer is Sandy Leighton, National WoNS Coordinator for Mimosa pigra and Athel Pine. Observers are Rae Kwong, Senior Biological Control Officer and Michael Schmid, Regional Weeds Officer both with the NRETA Weed Management Branch.

Day one at Berrimah Farm was the usual committee meeting followed by a series of excellent presentations from NT, QLD, WA and AQIS (Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy) on the progress and success of the National Mimosa Program to date in each of these jurisdictions.

Our field trip on day two enabled committee members to see first hand what is being achieved with Mimosa management on a commercially run Aboriginal pastoral lease on the Finniss River (Twin Hill) and on NT Land Corporation land in the Adelaide River catchment. On Twin Hill Station over 4,000 Ha of the Finniss River floodplain have been reclaimed and are now used as productive grazing lands. Simultaneously the large-scale Melaleuca forests have been reclaimed and protected. In contrast we saw areas adjacent to Twin Hill where Mimosa is not currently being controlled. At Adelaide River members saw a variety of biocontrol agents that are making an impact on core Mimosa infestations including Carmenta (Carmenta mimosa) and Macaria (Macaria pallidata).

On day three we all sat down and reviewed the National Mimosa Program, which began in the 1960s, and the achievements and progress to date, including preparing an historic overview of Mimosa invasion and management. We then looked at what the program still needs to achieve in order to deliver the national strategy vision and objectives.

This information provides substantial evidence on the progress being made and documents how national management and coordination is improving the delivery of the strategy. All of this information will be compiled and provide input into the review of the National Mimosa Program that will happen in early 2008. This review process is part of the Australian
Government’s review of all of the 20 Weeds of National Significance programs and will be overseen by the Australian Weeds Committee.

During the course of the meeting we were joined by Rae Kwong, Andrew Mitchell (AQIS) who oversees the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, Graeme Talbot (NRETA Parks) who works on mimosa management at Fogg Dam and Barbara Madigan, Research Officer with Biosecurity Queensland who works on the Mimosa eradication program at Peter Faust Dam in Queensland. Special thanks go to Megan English for taking minutes and Michael Schmid, Mark Ford, Rae Kwong and Steve Wingrave for their assistance in making the field trip a great success. Thanks also to NT DPIFM for the use of their Vet Lab conference room and facilities.

Sandy Leighton
National WoNS Coordinator – Mimosa pigra & Athel Pine
08 8951 9226
sandy.leighton@nt.gov.au

Profile Natasha Burrows

Natasha was raised in the Darwin rural area for the majority of her childhood.

Having completed a Diploma of Applied Science at the University of Queensland and a Bachelor of Science at Monash University in Melbourne, Natasha has returned to the Territory with her husband Bryce and their dog Fatty. They now reside at her parents’ property at Acacia.

Natasha’s first introduction to NRETA’s Weed Management Branch was in December 2006 as a volunteer with the Biocontrol Unit. She was later employed on a casual basis to assist in the Noogoora Burr Ecology Project and more recently, has replaced Anita Kier as Biological Control Technical Officer working on the mimosa project.

Having a genuine love of the Territory’s unique lifestyle and beautiful landscape she anticipates a long and joyous career with NRETA.
STATUTORY
WEED ADVISORY
COMMITTEES

In April 2007 the Minister approved the restructuring of the Weed Advisory Committees appointed under the Weeds Management Act. With the introduction of the new Act in 2001, the Minister appointed a number of Regional Advisory Committees with responsibility for weed issues in their respective areas. The Weed Management Branch undertook a review of the structure and effectiveness of these committees and identified a number of areas of duplication of effort and service. In addition, with the increasing focus on invasive species and biosecurity issues at a national level, it is important not to overburden members and stakeholders with these overlapping issues.

The restructure will see the appointment of a Northern Territory Weed Advisory Committee tasked with the development of weed management plans in consultation with other appropriate stakeholders. The committee will also provide advice to the Minister on weed management issues Territory wide.

This Committee will be supported by a number of Regional Reference Groups, to ensure there is continual input and emphasis on regional issues, while maintaining the opportunity to provide input into state and national issues as required. The efforts of these stakeholders are recognised as a crucial component in the effective operation of the Northern Territory Weed Advisory Committee.

Extensive consultation was conducted with members of the Regional Advisory Committees who supported the restructure. Expressions of interest for appointment of members to the NT Weed Advisory Committee and the various Regional Reference Groups are currently underway. It is anticipated that appointments will be announced shortly.

WEEDBUSTER WEEK

Weedbuster Week is a nation-wide event to help combat weeds. This year the theme was ‘Grow Me Instead’.

Weedbusters joined forces with the Australian Government’s ‘Defeating the Weed Menace’ program to help gardeners identify which plants can become a problem if they escape the garden, and to provide advice on how to manage these plants.

NT Weed Officers, Alison Derry and Roni Opden, took this message to nurseries and businesses across the Top End by promoting a newly produced ‘Garden Thug’ brochure. The focus was on making people aware of the legislative status of lantana and ornamental rubber vine as well as what they can do to help.

The brochure provides coloured illustrations and information on declared weeds that may exist in gardens and nurseries across the Northern Territory. The pamphlet also includes suggestions for native and non-invasive plants that can be used as replacement plants for any declared weeds that are removed.

Organisations such as NT Greening Australia also jumped on board by donating native plants as did the Coolalinga Shopping Centre who agreed to the removal of lantana from the gardens and chose native alternatives from the Garden Thug brochure to put back into the environment.

Alison Derry
Extension Coordinator
October 2007

Roni Opden mapping lantana in Darwin and Palmerston’s industrial and commercial areas
Weed all about it

Defeating the Weed Menace

Invasive plants present an extremely serious threat to Australia’s natural environment and agricultural regions. Invasive plant has the ability to thrive and spread aggressively outside its natural range. A naturally aggressive plant may be especially invasive when it is introduced to a new habitat. An invasive species that colonizes a new area may gain an ecological edge since the trees, diseases, feeding animals and environmental conditions that naturally keep its growth in check in its native range may not be present in its new habitat.

Unless the spread of invasive plants is slowed down, future generations may be left with the legacy of degraded Australian landscape. It is also estimated that weeds cost Australian agricultural production $4 billion each year.

Many invasive plants that are currently damaging the environment are plants that have "escaped" from urban parks and gardens. Choosing to grow plants that pose no risk to the natural environment will help protect native plants, animals and our fragile ecosystems.

What is a weed?

A weed is a plant that requires some form of action to reduce its effects on the economy, the environment, human health and amenity. A species that has not naturalized outside its original range and invaded areas of native vegetation is known as an environmental weed. A invasive weed is a plant that causes undue costs or harm to the environment.

How do garden plants cause a problem?

Some of the worst weed species in our native habitats have escaped from cultivation.

When invasive plants "escape" from gardens they reproduce and aggressively invade natural habitat, crowding out and threatening native plants and animals, impacting the habitat of native animals.

The Australian Government

National Weeds Awareness Coordinator Andrew Clark said the invasion of garden plants into the environment is putting Australia’s unique biodiversity at risk.

“It’s no secret that 65 per cent of Australia’s invasive weed species were first planted in gardens, so experienced and inexperienced gardeners alike need to be more aware of the kinds of species that are likely to escape into the bush,” Mr Clark said.

The print advertising in rural, regional and metropolitan newspapers plans to reach 92 per cent of the target audience, with up to eight viewings each, and will direct people to a new Australian Government web site www.weeds.gov.au.

Weeds Awareness Factsheet

Weeds Awareness Factsheet. Phone 8999 4567 for copies

Weeds awareness campaign

The Australian Government has launched a six-month print advertising campaign to raise awareness about invasive garden plants among gardeners.

The campaign was launched on 19 September 2007 and is part of the Australian Government’s Community and Industry Engagement Plan.

This campaign calls for gardeners across Australia to be responsible for the plants they grow, to properly manage garden waste and to prevent invasive plants spreading into the environment.

What can you do?

The landscape industry is a major source of advice to gardeners. What you can do play a direct role in minimizing the spread of invasive plants. Some things to consider include:

- Find out what plants are potential problems in your area and don’t include them in garden designs.
- Replace any potentially invasive garden plants with suitable alternatives.
- Only choose plants that are indigenous to the area of your garden designs.
- Know what plants are listed as noxious in your state or territory.

Provide accurate plant lists to your clients with formal botanical names as many landscape plants are supplied without labels.

Choose species of plant material that you remove from a garden site in an appropriate manner. Planting a species of weeds in a natural range is in the key natures" needs.

Ensure the growing trends being used and species are free of potential invasive plant seeds and propagules.

Seek information on potentially invasive plants.

Is more information available?

More information is available from your local council, garden retailers or wherever garden centre at www.weeds.gov.au.