

WEED CONTROL POSITION STATEMENT

1. Introduction

Weeds are introduced plants that can have negative impacts on natural environments, bushfire fuel loads and amenity. Weed control is a shared responsibility across land owners and managers, including the Shire of Mundaring.

This position statement has been prepared to more clearly explain the Shire's approach to weed management.

2. Prioritising Weeds

It is impossible to eradicate all weed species. Shire resources and weed control efforts should be directed to weeds that have worse impacts (such as rapid spreading, or increased bushfire risk). The Shire will maintain and regularly update a Priority Weeds List to guide staff, and make the list available to residents and environmental volunteers. This list will be informed by declared Weeds of National Significance, Declared Plants in WA, and the local knowledge and experience of Shire staff.

Shire staff in the Community Safety and Emergency Management Service undertake weed control as part of reducing bushfire hazard within Shire reserves. Their efforts are focussed on weed species that can contribute significantly to bushfire fuel loads, rather than environmental or aesthetic weed issues. Their efforts are also focussed on the reserves, or parts of reserves, that are closest to residential areas. Controlled burns can contribute to weed control within natural areas, and provide an opportunity to target emergent weeds in the year after fire.

Where possible, Operations Service staff will undertake follow-up weed control after controlled burns in nature reserves. Staff within the Landcare Team (Parks) prioritise weed control based on the ecological significance of the reserve, the priority status and impacts of weed species, and opportunities to support volunteer work by schools and Friends Groups. Within nature reserves the Shire generally follows the 'Bradley method' of bush regeneration. This prioritises work in the areas that are in the most natural, undisturbed state, to maintain high conservation values.

Shire staff managing landscaped parks and ovals will prioritise control of weeds that impact on the use and enjoyment of those areas. This will include a focus on 'prickly weeds' and those that interfere with turf and playing surfaces, in addition to the Priority Weeds List.

Operations Service staff working to control weeds on road reserves will prioritise weed control on state listed Flora Roads, and weeds on verges adjacent to conservation areas. Scheduling of works on other road reserves will be a balance between targeting locations with priority weed species and maximising cost-effectiveness (noting very high costs where traffic management is required). Verges adjacent to private properties are generally managed by the adjacent landowner.

Where there is a small population of a certain weed and local eradication is still possible, it may warrant a concerted effort before it spreads and establishes more widely. This may involve providing information and assistance to nearby landowners.

3. Weed Control Methods

All methods of weed control include some degree of risk, mainly to the person undertaking weed control activities. Tools, machinery, manual labour and herbicides all have risks that must be managed. The most appropriate method of weed control will depend on the weed species, location, and resources available. The Priority Weeds List will provide some guidance on the most effective control methods for serious weeds.

The Shire is responsible for managing weeds across many parks and reserves. Shire staff and contractors will select weed control methods based on what will be effective for the targeted weeds and minimise disturbance to surrounding plants. A summary of the major weed control methods is listed below.

Mechanical	Mowing, slashing, or use of a forestry mulcher can be useful as an initial treatment in certain situations to reduce weed volumes. It will often require follow-up treatment with herbicide to reduce regrowth and have a long-term impact on the weed population.
Manual	Hand weeding and use of hand tools (including chainsaws etc) can be effective on small areas or small populations of weeds. Undertaken at the right time of year, it can help prevent spread of seed. It is not effective on some weed species (including bulbs) and may increase erosion on slopes. Manual weed control is labour intensive and relatively slow, and has an increased risk of physical injury.
Chemical	Use of herbicides is generally the most cost-effective method of weed control and there are a range of approved herbicides for different situations or types of weeds. Risks associated with herbicides vary, but some have been exaggerated through media and social media coverage. Use of herbicides needs to follow directions from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, and the WA Department of Health (including gloves and protective clothing where recommended).
Thermal	Flame wands and steam weeding are used in some urban and agricultural areas for weed control. Both have high material costs (and related environmental impacts) in gas cartridges for flame weeders, and large volumes of diesel and water for steam weeders. There is a seasonal window for use of flame wands on susceptible weeds. Steam weeding is relatively slow, not effective on plants with large root systems or bulbs, and limited to areas accessible with a trailer. Risks to operators are burns for both, and noise and diesel fumes for steam weeding.

Shire staff will use a variety of weed control methods but seek to limit over-use of chemicals. Approaches to limiting chemical use will include initial mechanical and manual treatments where suitable, and using weed wands, 'cut-and-paint' applications, and smaller spray nozzles.

4. Weed Control on Reserves

The Shire may request bushfire hazard mitigation works including weed control on reserves managed by State Government agencies and entities. Weed control on Shire-managed reserves is primarily undertaken by Shire staff and Shire contractors, assisted by volunteer Friends Groups on nature reserves.

Friends Group members can tackle smaller weeds on nature reserves through hand pulling. For larger weeds or larger infestations, Friends Groups are encouraged to request assistance from the Shire's Landcare Team or a contractor engaged by the Shire. The Friends Group Manual provides additional guidance on the support and training opportunities available to Friends Group volunteers.

5. Weed Control on Verges

As noted above, management of verges is a shared responsibility. Shire staff and Shire contractors will focus on Flora Roads, verges adjacent to nature reserves, and priority weed species. The Shire will provide instructions to contractors to ensure the careful use of herbicides on road reserves.

Residents who are concerned about use of chemicals on adjacent verges can undertake their own non-chemical weed control. Information on local weeds including the *Plants Out of Place* book can be provided to help residents identify and remove weeds. Shire staff or contractors undertaking spraying for priority weeds on verges will then not need to apply any treatment to that verge.

6. Weed Control on Private Property

The Shire makes information available to residents on local weed species and control options through the free *Plants Out of Place* book and information sheets, and targeted letters near known infestations or outbreaks of priority weeds.

Advice on reducing bushfire fuel loads is available from the Shire's Community Safety and Emergency Management Services. This can include on-site advice from Fire Hazard Inspection Officers. An information sheet on removing weedy wattles is available from the Shire website or in print form.

Landowners are advised to carefully follow safety directions on tools and herbicides, and to consider hiring a licenced and experienced contractor for more serious infestations.

7. Complaints about Weed Control

Concerns about neighbouring properties failing to control serious weeds should be raised first with the landowner, before seeking advice from the Shire. In the case of Declared Plants enquiries may be directed to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Requests for additional Shire weed control within reserves should be directed to Operations Services. All requests will be considered but as noted above, Shire resources are limited and efforts will be prioritised based on weed species and reserve characteristics.

Complaints about weed control activities undertaken by Shire staff or Shire contractors should be made to the Shire in writing, with information about the time, date and location. If contractors engaged by the Shire are not complying with instructions issued by the Shire, this may be treated as a breach of contract, or the Shire may seek alternative providers for future work.

For more information contact:

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