

## Removing Bulbous Weeds



**Some spring flowers are weeds, not wildflowers. Hardy, bulbous weeds can be tough to control.**



Some pretty garden plants can cause serious issues when they spread into bushland or take over creeklines. Many garden bulbs and corms were cultivated for hardiness and drought tolerance. These traits also allow them to thrive in our local bushland.

The Shire's Landcare Team and Weed Control Crew are targeting Watsonia and other weedy bulbs on Shire reserves. To make sure they don't come back, we also need residents to take action by choosing not to plant any more of these weedy species, and remove or control existing ones on their properties. Let's work to control these weeds together.

### Why should we remove weedy bulbs?

- When they spread into bushland they crowd out local native plant species and disrupt local ecosystems. This affects habitat and food sources for native animals
- Some species, such as Watsonia, increase bushfire fuel loads as they die back annually producing large amounts of dry leaf material
- Many bulbous weeds can also spread by seed and rapidly invade local bushland or waterways
- A bulb's ability to die back to an underground energy store during summer means they can tolerate drought and fire

### When is the best time to remove weedy bulbs?

Manual removal can be done at any time of the year, however autumn, winter and spring are better to remove weedy bulbs while the leafy top parts of the plant are green and visible. If you choose to use chemical treatment, this is best done at the point of bulb exhaustion, usually just before or at flowering time. If seed, cormels or bulbils are present they should be cut off and bagged to make sure they don't spread while being transported.



Watsonia leaves emerging in autumn amongst dry, dead leaves from previous growing season

## How do I remove weedy bulbs?

Herbicides need to be used with care, but they are effective for controlling most bulbs. Spot spraying with a suitable herbicide at the recommended rate works well in very weedy areas. A weed wiper is useful amongst other vegetation to minimise risk to nearby plants. A simple weed wiper can be constructed from a pair of tongs with some pieces of sponge attached. More information can be found in the [Plants out of Place](#) weeds booklet.



A home-made weed wiper can be used to apply herbicide instead of spraying

Alternatively, most bulbs and corms can be removed by either hand pulling or digging them out. Ensure the entire bulb is removed with the leaves and does not break off. Digging with a trowel, or loosening the soil with a garden fork or screwdriver before pulling can help. Extra care should be taken when removing Gladiolus so the developing cormels are not left behind.

Remove flowers to prevent seeds from forming. Mowing at flowering time will not kill bulbs, but can offer some control with many species and will help prevent seed being produced.

## Local Native Plants

Please ensure positive identification of weeds before removing them as there are some local native plants, such as the Scented Sun Orchid, which could be mistaken for weedy bulbs prior to flowering. Refer to the following free resources to help identify local native plants. These booklets are available from the Shire website (Environmental Services section) or printed copies can be picked up from the Administration Building. The libraries will often have some copies available too. Where practical, we encourage you to plant local native plants in place of the removed weeds.

- Darlington & Surrounds Local Flora & Bushlands (Cliff & Sharron Burns) – [Link](#)
- Shire's Landscape & Revegetation Guidelines – [Link](#)

*If in doubt, don't pull it out – instead contact the Shire's Environmental Service team on 9290 6651 for assistance with identifying if the plant is a native or a weed.*

## Where do I dispose of weeds?









Check fire restrictions before burning dried material. Depending on the size of your property, time of year and the amount of weedy material you wish to dispose of, you could:

- Securely bag and bin the bulbs and any material you think has seeds in. This is to avoid spreading them during transport, or through the mulch made from green waste. You can take leafy green waste to the Shire's [Community Recycling Centres](#) (Coppin Road, Mundaring or Mathieson Road, Chidlow) using your resident entry pass.
- Most bulbs can be solarised or composted on a sheet of black plastic after being pulled out.

## Other Weeds

This information sheet only focuses on common weedy bulb species. Please refer to the Shire's free [Plants out of Place](#) booklet for information on other weeds in the Shire and recommended removal methods. Printed versions of this booklet are available from the Shire Administration Building, or you can find it within the Environmental Services section of the Shire website at [www.mundaring.wa.gov.au](http://www.mundaring.wa.gov.au).

## Common Weedy Bulbs, Corms & Tubers

<p><b><u>Arum lily</u></b> <b><i>(Zantedeschia aethiopica)</i></b></p> <p>Can be toxic to children, pets and livestock. An annual tuft of lush dark green, shiny leaves arising from perennial tuberous roots. Leaf blades are heart or arrow-shaped and are 25cm long. The large, white, funnel-like flower is 10cm wide, has a yellow spike and is produced in late winter to spring. The orange-yellow berries can be spread by birds and water.</p>		
<p><b><u>Freesia</u></b> <b><i>(Freesia alba x leichtlinii)</i></b></p> <p>Tufted plants with soft, light basal leaves arising annually from a perennial corm. The erect flowering stem is bent to one side just below the lowest flower. It has white or creamy yellow flowers which have yellow to orange markings. The tubular flowers occur in spring, arranged on one side of the flower stalk and are sweet, strongly scented. Freesias reproduce by seed, bulbils and corms.</p>		
<p><b><u>Babiana</u></b> <b><i>(Babiana angustifolia)</i></b></p> <p>Produces annual leaves and stems from a perennial corm and grows to 35cm high. Leaves are hairy, striped or ribbed and are folded lengthwise like a fan. Flower spike is produced from August to October and has 3 -10 individual flowers which are purple, blue or mauve with red to black markings. Reproduces by corms and seed.</p>		
<p><b><u>Watsonia</u></b> <b><i>(Watsonia spp)</i></b></p> <p>Watsonia and the similar African Cornflag (<i>Chasmanthe floribunda</i>) have erect sword-shaped leaves to 1m in length, which grow annually from a perennial corm. A tall flower spike with many trumpet shaped flowers is produced from late winter to early summer. The flowers can be pink, lilac, white, orange or yellow depending on the species. Reproduction can be by seed, bulbils and corms. Dry material adds significantly to bushfire fuel loads.</p>		

**If you need more information or assistance to identify bulbs contact:  
Shire's Environmental Service - 9290 6651**

**Gladiolus – Pink, Wavy and Long-tubed Painted Lady**  
***(Gladiolus caryophyllaceus, G. undulatus, G. angustus)***

Gladiolus species (gladdies) produce 3–6 erect sword-shaped leaves annually which die back in summer to a perennial underground corm. An upright flower spike is produced above the basal leaves. Reproduction is by seed and cormels.



**Cape Tulip**  
***(Moraea flaccida)***

Usually produces one dark green, strap-like leaf up to 70cm long, annually from a small corm. The branched flowering stem is produced in late winter and spring and has short-lived pink to orange flowers, each flower has six petals. Reproduces by corms and seed. Prior to flowering, Cape Tulip can be recognised by the browning off of the leaf tips. Can be toxic to livestock.



**Soursob**  
***(Oxalis pes-caprae)***

A small upright herb producing annual foliage from a perennial bulb. Leaves are bright green, sometimes with dark markings, and consist of three heart shaped leaflets. It produces clusters of bright yellow, trumpet shaped flowers from June to October.



**Three-cornered Garlic or Onion Weed**  
***(Allium triquetrum)***

Three-cornered Garlic has a tuft of soft leaves arising annually from a small, pale bulb. The leaves have a strong 'onion' or 'garlic' smell when crushed. A distinctive three cornered flowering stem is produced in late winter to early spring and is topped with a bunch of drooping, white, bell-shaped flowers. Reproduction is by seed and bulbs.

