

African Boxthorn

African boxthorn is a fast growing, destructive weed invading roads, pastures, bushland and waterways.

WHAT IS AFRICAN BOXTHORN?

African boxthorn is a weed that creates an impervious thicket, which limits the movement of stock and provides shelter to feral animals. Growth can survive in all soil types but particularly in light soil, dry creek beds. The spread of African Boxthorn is by seed which is eaten by birds and viable when passed through.

African boxthorn spreads exclusively by seed which is commonly eaten by birds. These plants are often found near places where birds have perched such as trees, poles and powerlines. Spread also occurs from contaminated produce and materials.

IMPACTS TO THE REGION

African boxthorn is a dangerous toxic weed that impacts the region when in contact with humans and animals. The berries, leaves, stems and roots are all poisonous. Contact with any of these parts will cause pain and discomfort however, it is not life threatening.

Impacts of African boxthorn include:

- large thorns which can injure livestock;
- forms spiny thickets that block access for vehicles, livestock and people;
- invades pastures, roadsides, reserves, remnant bushland and waterways;
- provides shelter and food for pest animals including foxes, rabbits and starlings;
- prevents livestock from accessing shade;
- is poisonous to humans;
- host for pest insects including fruit fly, tomato fly and house fly; or
- once large in size, the weed will outcompete native plants and can invade watercourses, limiting animals to access water.

HOW TO IDENTIFY

African boxthorn is a woody, thorny shrub with stems that can grow up to 5m height and 3m wide.

The leaves are bright green and oval in shape with a rounded tip. Usually present in spring and summer, the fragrant weed flowers white to purple with five petals tubular at the base with purple or pale blue markings. In autumn round berries can be present on the weed. When young these are green, becoming orange and red in colour when ripe.



GROWS UP TO 5M IN HEIGHT



BRIGHT GREEN, OVAL LEAVES



LARGE THORNS CAUSE INJURY



BERRIES RIPEN IN AUTUMN

Images: NSW DPI

CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT

Successful weed control requires follow up after the initial efforts. Using a combination of control methods is a successful strategy to manage weeds.

Pasture management

Vigorous native perennial pastures compete with African boxthorn. Establish pastures as soon as possible after weed removal. Consult an agronomist for advice on pasture establishment and management for your location.



Physical removal

Remove by machine all year round especially after rain when the soil is moist. It is important to destroy all plant material after physical removal as dead thorny branches still pose a problem.



Cultivation

After physical removal of plants when regrowth appears, deep rip the soil to bring remaining root fragments to the surface. Rake and burn the root pieces. Cultivation may cause deeper root fragments to shoot. Check and treat above ground regrowth.



Chemical control

Herbicides can make the plants lose their leaves and appear dead. New leaves may appear and the plant begins to recover. This may happen several times before the plant dies.



Foliar spray

Ideally use spray in spring, after rain when the plant is actively growing. Follow-up in autumn when new seedlings appear. Use other methods to control regrowth or wait until regrowth is over 50cm high (approximately 18 months old) to repeat spraying.



Basal bark treatment

All year-round when regrowth appears use basal barking in environmentally sensitive locations. It is a successful strategy best for small bushes with stem diameters up to 5cm. Cover the base of every stem to a height of 30 to 40cm above the soil surface.



Cut stump treatment

This technique is appropriate for large plants with stem diameters greater than 5cm. Cut each stem off 15 cm above the soil surface. Cover the cut surface with herbicide immediately.



Root application

This method uses a residual herbicide that will remain active in the soil for some time. Many desirable trees e.g. eucalyptus, are susceptible to the residual herbicides. Do not use this method within a distance of at least twice the height of adjacent desirable trees or shrubs.



RESPONSIBILITY

For land owners under the Biosecurity Act 2015, you have a General Biosecurity Duty (GBD) where you are expected to, within reason know about any weeds which may impact your land. Owners should have a plan of management in place to reduce, minimise or eliminate the risk posed by weeds on your property.

When you report African boxthorn, the infected area will be inspected Council along with a management strategy plan. A follow-up inspection will then be arranged. Council is responsible for enforcing the Biosecurity Act 2015 and its regulations. This includes fines for failure to comply with GBD.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit Council's website midwestern.nsw.gov.au, or the NSW DPI website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au and search 'weeds'. Council's Weeds Team are available to assist on 6378 2939 or at weeds.admin@midwestern.nsw.gov.au.

DISCLAIMER | The information contained in this fact sheet is general in nature and should not be relied upon as the complete source of information to be considered. This document is not intended as a substitute for consulting relevant legislation or for obtaining appropriate professional advice relevant to your particular circumstances.

References: NSW DPI, Natural Resources South Australia, www.herbiguide.com.au