

Post-fire woody weed control in bushland

Fact sheet | May 2015



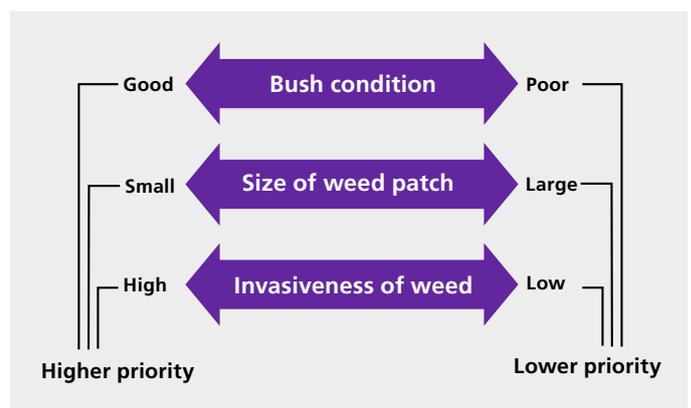
Many environmental weeds in South Australia are 'fire-responsive'. This means that after a fire they come back with a vengeance. Post-fire conditions also make it easy for new weed infestations to establish.

However, this is a great time to tackle weed infestations more easily than you could before the fire. If you can control regenerating weeds before they set seed, you'll be able to get on top of these weedy patches much more quickly.

Tips on a successful weed control program

Here are some tips to ensure your post-fire weed control program is a success:

1. Work out weed control priorities using the diagram across. Your highest priorities will be small infestations, in better quality bushland that contain weeds that are likely to spread.
2. Ensure you can identify your target weeds from similar looking native species. Plants that regrow after fire can look different to what you're used to!



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3. Find out the most effective herbicides and control techniques for your priority weeds. Remember to choose techniques that kill the weeds but NOT the surrounding native plants.
4. Think about the most effective timing for weed control (see below).
5. Effective planning can save you time, energy and money. Contact your local natural resources centre for advice.

Common woody weeds post fire

Boneseed, English Broom, Montpellier Broom and Gorse are common, fire-responsive weeds. The adult plants are usually killed by fire, but their seed will germinate after the fire resulting in masses of seedlings. In areas of lower fire intensity (where small leaves are left on some shrubs), some weeds may survive and resprout from their base.

Fire does not kill adult blackberry plants – they almost always resprout.

Resprouting and unburnt weeds

Patches of unburnt weeds, and weeds not killed by the fire that have resprouted, are capable of flowering and setting seed quicker than seedlings. To prevent them dropping new seed into the burnt area, control them first before worrying about the masses of seedlings emerging!

Resprouting weeds may be difficult to hand pull so control them by cutting and swabbing (at any time, except in the colder months for blackberry), or carefully spot-spraying when they have a decent amount of leaf growth and are actively growing (i.e. usually spring to summer but not when plants are heat-stressed).

Don't confuse natives with weeds!

The examples below show that many weeds have a native look-alike so check carefully



Introduced Blackberry



Native Raspberry



Introduced Gorse



Native Bristly Bush Pea



Weed seedling emergence, growth and control – planning your weed control

Weed	Time to seedling emergence	Time to flowering	Control methods	Control timing	Notes
Boneseed	After first post-fire rain (regardless of season)	9+ months	*Hand pull	Wait until oldest plants are shin high; most seedlings should have germinated by this time	
English Broom	After first significant rains post-fire (regardless of season)	Typically in the 2nd or 3rd spring post-fire	*Hand pull	Plants shin to knee high	Fire intensity low: seedlings often continue to emerge up to 4 years. Fire intensity high: most seedlings emerge in the first year.
			**Cut and swab or basal stem treatment	Any season	
			***Spot spray	Late spring / summer	
Montpellier Broom	Usually late autumn to spring	Possible in 1st spring post-fire but generally in 2nd	*Hand pull	Plants shin to knee high	Fire intensity low: seedlings often emerge up to 4 years. Fire intensity high: most seedlings emerge in the first year.
			**Cut and swab	Any season.	
			***Spot spray	Late spring / summer	
Gorse	After first significant rains post-fire (regardless of season)	Typically in the 2nd or 3rd spring post-fire	*Hand pull	When plants are less than 20 cm high	Fire intensity low: seedlings often emerge up to 4 years. Fire intensity high: most seedlings emerge in the first year.
			**Cut and swab	Any season	
			***Spot spray	Late spring / summer	
Blackberry	Adult blackberry plants will resprout; seedlings may also germinate after post-fire rain in intensely burnt areas	Undertake control before significant plant growth rather than before flowering	**Cut and swab	Any time when plant is actively growing	Seedlings may appear up to 2 years post-fire.
			Grub out	Late summer / early autumn before canes have grown substantially	
			***Spot spray		

*Hand pulling: Most easily done when soil is moist, plants are not large and are scattered or in small patches. Doesn't impact surrounding native plants.

**Cut and swab; basal stem treatment: Best when weeds are scattered or in small patches and are too big to hand pull. Doesn't impact surrounding native plants.

***Spot spray: Best when weed patches are dense and too large to tackle using other techniques. Herbicides can kill nearby native plants. To minimise this, it's important to use selective herbicides, with a careful technique, after most lilies and orchids have died back (late spring). Only effective when plants are not heat stressed. Not best technique for English Broom. For specific advice please contact your local natural resources centre.



Natural resources centres

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