



W Weedscene

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Newsletter of the Weed Society of Victoria Inc.

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Weed Society of Victoria Events – Coming Soon!

41st Annual General Meeting

The 41st Annual General Meeting of the Weed Society of Victoria will be on Thursday 19 April 2007 at 16.30 (4.30 pm) and will follow the seminar 'Over the Garden Fence and Far Away – Communities' Action on Weeds' at the same venue. Participate in this meeting and have your say on how the Society operates. Proxy and Committee Nomination forms appeared in Weedscene 18 Issue 1 January 2007.

Seminar: 'Over the Garden Fence and Far Away – Communities' Action on Weeds'

Thursday 19 April 2007, in the Dandenong Ranges at Burrinja Community Centre and Gallery, Matson Road, Upwey (Melway ref 75 B12). Registration will be upstairs near the Lecture Room.

The seminar will examine the problems that face community groups attempting to clear an area of weeds, and looks at how they can help themselves and also keep their areas weed free. There will be space available for displays and posters. Contact the Secretary, Ros Shepherd [see page 4 for details], for program and speaker details, or if you would like space for a display or poster.

Royal Society Speaker: Transgenic Crops

On 12 July at 7.00 pm the speaker at the Royal Society of Victoria will be Prof. Richard Roush, Land and Food Resources, The University of Melbourne. His topic will be 'Transgenic crops: bane for the environment or part of sustainable agriculture?'

For further information contact 03 9663 5259, email rsvs@sciencevictoria.org.au, web at www.sciencevictoria.org.au.

3rd Biennial Victorian Weeds Conference

Earth Wind Fire Water and Weeds
3–4 October 2007, Bendigo, Victoria

The four elements: Earth, Wind, Fire and Water were identified many centuries ago in both the West and in the East as being constitutive of the world in which we live. The conference theme highlights the elements as they relate to weeds:

Earth – climate change, geospatial technology, global issues, national, state, regional and local planning.

Wind – spray technology, wind dispersal.

Fire – fire as a tool, post-fire recovery.

Water – aquatic weed management, water catchment health, drought and its effect on weeds.

Speakers presenting at the conference include Roger Cousens, University of Melbourne; Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Primary Industries, Frankston; and Ken Young, University of Melbourne.

Land managers, scientists, community volunteers, weeds officers, advisors and all people with an interest in weeds are invited to hear the latest in weed management and science in Victoria, to network and share experiences.

For more information contact the Secretary Ros Shepherd [see page 4 for details].

Native Vegetation Management Tools

Greening Australia has released a number of tools in electronic and hard copy formats to inform native vegetation management. Resources include Bush Tracks, Riverways, Native Vegetation & Regional Management, and Native Vegetation & Property Management. To access resources visit: <http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/GA/NAT/TipsAndTools/exchange/MAV NRM Supplement>

Irrigated Farms Report

Irrigated farms generate 25% of the gross value of Australia's agricultural production, according to a joint report released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Productivity Commission.

The gross value of irrigated production was \$9 billion in 2003–04. Irrigated horticulture made up 52% of the gross value followed by irrigated pastures (24%) and irrigated broadacre crops (24%). In 2003–04, 2.4 million hectares of agricultural land and 10,000 gegalitres of water were used for irrigated agricultural activities. This constituted only 0.5% of all agricultural land, but accounted for about 70% of Australia's annual use of extracted water by rural, industry and domestic users.

The report, *Characteristics of Australia's Irrigated Farms 2000–01 to 2003–04*, found that irrigated farms with a higher value of production were more likely to irrigate in successive years. These farms also incurred lower ongoing irrigation expenses relative to their irrigation water use and were more likely to recycle irrigation water and use irrigation scheduling equipment. It found that of the 130,500 agricultural establishments that operated in 2003–04, 40,400 irrigated.

The report can be downloaded from <http://www.abs.gov.au/>.

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Copy Deadline for Next Issue:
20 April 2007

Weed Spotters – Weed Alert

Weed Alert As all good gardeners know ‘one year of seeding produces seven years weeding’. This old expression makes a lot of sense. If a weed can be stopped from seeding and getting away, a lot of hard work and effort can be avoided.

The Victoria Government is taking the same approach to potential, new and emerging weeds. By preventing serious new weeds from escaping and establishing, Victorians and the rest of Australia can save millions of dollars in lost agricultural production, control costs, environmental impacts, and losses to other social values.

The Weed Alert program in Victoria aims to prevent serious new weeds establishing and spreading in the State. It is much easier and cheaper to contain and eradicate a weed while in a small patch rather than when it covers thousands of hectares.

The Weed Alert program is detailed within a document called the Weed Alert Rapid Response Plan Victoria (WARR Plan). To keep the program current, the plan is updated regularly. A copy of the plan is available from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) website www.dpi.vic.gov.au.

There is a team of people in Victoria dealing with these potential, new and emerging weeds and the team regularly shares information with interstate colleagues about weeds that are being discovered and illegally traded across borders. Many of our new weeds are escaping from gardens. Some of our weeds that have been declared in Victoria continue to be traded illegally and grown in gardens.

Who are Weed Spotters? Weed Spotters are people who assist the Victorian Government by keeping an eye open for and reporting potential, new or emerging weeds to the State. These include agricultural (e.g. cropping and pasture weeds) and environmental weeds (weeds that invade bushland and other natural areas).

Weed Spotters can be anyone interested in plants. They include gardeners, farmers, teachers, students, members of groups such as ‘Friends’ and Landcare Groups, contractors and consultants, local government staff, and other agency

staff. DPI and DSE staff can also be Weed Spotters.

Weed Spotters do not need to have botanical training. A keen interest and eye for plants is the basic starting point. DPI will provide training in the identification of the target weeds and how to report them. Weed Spotters who attend training will receive a kit containing information to assist in the identification and collection of weed specimens. They also receive a quarterly newsletter called ‘Under Control’.

What do Weed Spotters do? Weed Spotters are asked to be observant during their day-to-day activities and look out for a number of serious potential, new and emerging weeds in Victoria. As well as reporting these target weeds, Weed Spotters can also report other plants new to their district. These plants may be new weeds to the State.

As part of the reporting process, Weed Spotters may be asked to collect a sample or specimen of the plant with some information and send it to their local DPI Weed Alert Contact Officer. DPI is generally not asking Weed Spotters to become involved in the on-ground management of these weeds. Weed Spotters will contribute to validating the distribution of Victorian Alert Weeds in Victoria.

Where to look for new weeds? Weed Spotters can look for new weeds anywhere. This includes agricultural areas such as farms, along roadsides, in bushland, coastal dunes, wetlands and other natural areas, production forests, waste places, urban fringes (where urban areas meet farming or bushland), home gardens, cemeteries, weekend markets, fetes, nurseries, garden centres, in the media, on the internet. Potential, new and emerging weeds can be growing or traded anywhere.

Which weeds to look for? Weed Spotters are only being asked to keep an eye open for potential, new and emerging weeds in Victoria. This does not include common weeds like Paterson’s curse, blackberry, ragwort, serrated tussock, gorse or St John’s wort, even if they are new to one part of the State and common in others. Weed Spotters are only being asked to re-

port potential, new and emerging weeds to Victoria.

There are particular potential, new and emerging weeds that the Victorian Government is looking for. These include those declared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) in the ‘State Prohibited Weed’ category and Victorian Alert Weeds which are under consideration for declaration under the CaLP Act. Weeds in both these groups may be weeds in agriculture, the environment or threaten human health. They may be weeds on land or in water.

State Prohibited Weeds and Victorian Alert Weeds are rarely naturalised (growing and spreading beyond cultivation without human help) in Victoria and there is a good chance that they can be eradicated if found. Some may only be found in private or public gardens or for sale and there is a high risk that they could escape from cultivation. Some are not present at all in Victoria and DPI wants to keep it that way. In addition to the two weed groups above, DPI also asks people to report new plants to their district that they have never seen before. They could be new weeds to Victoria.

When to look? Weeds grow at all times of the year in Victoria. To assist with the identification of many weeds, it is usually easier to see and identify them when they are flowering. If you are looking for targeted weeds, learn the times of the year when they are actively growing (some weeds are dormant below ground e.g. over winter) and flowering. Start your own weed calendar to record the months of flowering.

What to do if you find a possible new weed? To report new weeds in Victoria, call 136 186 and ask for your nearest Weed Alert Contact Officer or read the Weed Spotter Handbook. If you are interstate, new weeds can be reported to the Australian Weed Alert Hotline on 1800 084 881.

Hygiene It is very important that Weed Spotters do not spread weeds further. Being aware of hygiene is very important. Seeds and other plant parts are easily carried on footwear, clothing, equipment, vehicles and companion dogs. Some seeds have burrs or spines that stick to shoe laces and clothing; some are carried in mud or even dust. Some will adhere to plastic bags that are charged with static electricity. Be sure you do not spread weeds further.



Want to become a Weed Spotter? If you would like to become a Weed Spotter, contact the Customer Service Centre on 136 186 to register. We will need your name, postal address, daytime phone number and an email address if you have one.

Case Study - Mexican feather grass

An example of the benefits of preventing the establishment of a serious potential weed is the DPI focus on the removal and tracing of Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*). Acting to prevent the establishment of new species of weeds is a cost-effective use of government and community resources. Mexican feather grass is closely related to serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) which is one of the worst pasture grasses in Australia, one of 20 Weeds of National Significance and costs Australian agriculture over \$50 million per year in lost production and control costs to agriculture.

The closely related Mexican feather grass has the potential to invade 70% of Victoria and a greater range of territory in Australia than serrated tussock. Mexican feather grass is prohibited entry to Australia by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

Mexican feather grass has been heavily promoted in overseas gardening magazines and books as an attractive and drought hardy garden plant. Overseas, it is known as *Stipa tenuissima* or *S. tenuifolia*, pony tail grass, and angel's hair. The growing trend in prairie-style and low water use gardens has reached Australia and has seen the promotion of this ornamental grass from Texas, New Mexico and central Mexico here in Australia.

Gardeners and growers can order seeds from overseas via the internet or mail-order services. Seeds have been posted to Australia and nurseries and gardeners have grown the highly invasive grass in Victoria and interstate.

In December 1998, a subscriber to the 'Enviroweeds' email discussion group alerted us to Mexican feather grass in a central Victorian nursery. This person has subsequently become a Weed Spotter and reports other new weeds.

DPI, with the assistance of the Co-operative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management (Weeds CRC), has traced and destroyed Mexican feather grass plants as they are found. The Weeds CRC estimated in 2000 that this action may have saved Australia \$39 million over the next 60 years. WARR activities not only save Victorians millions of dollars but also have benefits Australia-wide.

Provided by Daniel Joubert

Integrated Weed Management Manual



The long awaited final version of the Weeds CRC IWM manual is now available. This world class manual, Integrated Weed Management in Australian Cropping Systems, was written with contributions from some of Australia's leading weed scientists.

'This is probably the single most important product developed by the Weeds CRC over its 5.5 year life so far. The CRC Integrated Weed Management manual has involved years of work by Australian researchers and writers, and draws on 20 years of science and trials across the entire Australian cropping zone. It will be a key tool in the fight against the rise of herbicide resistance in our minimum-till herbicide dependent farming systems' said Dr Rachel McFadyen, CEO, CRC for Australian Weed Management.

Published in November 2006 by the CRC for Australian Weed Management, it is in colour, loose leaf in a ring binder, 248 pages. Available from R.G. and F.J. Richardson at www.weedinfo.com.au or Tel/Fax 03 5286 1533 or mail PO Box 42, Meredith, Vic 3333. Price \$A88.00 plus \$A10 postage within Australia.

Enter the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes

\$80,000 of prizes to reward outstanding Environmental Science. Nominations and entries for the 2007 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes are now open.

Prizes for environmental science are offered in areas of Research and Innovation, Leadership, School Science and Science Communication and Journalism. This year prizes will be awarded for:

- Innovative Solutions to Climate Change
- Water Research and Innovation
- Environmental Sustainability Education
- Environmental Research
- Young Leader in Environmental Issues and Climate Change
- Earth, Environmental and Planetary Sciences
- Environmental Journalism
- Science Photography

For more information on the prizes and how to enter visit: www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka. Entries close at 5 pm AEST on 4 May 2007. *EnviroInfo*

Parks Victoria Protocols

Parks Victoria has developed environmental threat protocols to monitor pest animals and pest plants in conservation reserves to enable evaluation of the efficiency and level of success of control programs. The protocols provide scientifically based and standardised monitoring techniques written specifically for environmental practitioners in the field providing long term data and trends on environmental threats. The protocols on offer are robust, easy to use and applicable in a wide range of circumstances. For an electronic copy contact Glen Jameson gjameson@parks.vic.gov.au or Tel (03) 8627 4718 *MAV Environment*

EUREKA! AgResearch Pty. Ltd.



For further information about EUREKA! contact:

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EWRS Education and Training Working Group

The Education and Training Working Group web site of the European Weed Research Society has been redesigned. In the past, the Education and Training Working Group gave several general Weed Science courses in Eastern Europe. Today they have rethought the concept of education and training by expanding from a traditional lecture style to e-learning.

The EWRS webmaster has set up a discussion area at <http://www.ewrs.org/et/forum/index.html> for members interested in contributing to E&T. Currently a one day workshop in analysing herbicide dose response curves with free software (URL: www.Bioassay.dk) is being offered in conjunction with EWRS events such as the EWRS Symposium in Bari 2005 and the upcoming one in Hammar Norway. The course should help elucidate some concrete weed science problems, which are not trivial to solve and interpret.

Many other problem oriented workshops could be organized such as data analysis using non-linear regression for seed germination, critical competition period and competition models and studies. Another topic that could be developed is in the use of simulation models.

However, EWRS members must get involved if they want more topical workshops to be developed. Therefore, they invite you to actively participate in the working group by suggesting topics that you would like to see offered in short courses and/or e-learning. You are just a click away from influencing the content and form of the E&T group, <http://www.ewrs.org/et/index.html>.

Jens C. Streibig

University of Copenhagen, Denmark

[Editor's note: Perhaps this is something the Weed Society of Victoria could look into]

2007 Fellowship for Environmental Sustainability

A Fellowship has been established in recognition of the contribution of the late Dr Brian Robinson (AM) to environmental sustainability in Victoria. The Fellowship is designed to recognise and assist young people who are making a significant contribution to the future sustainability of Victoria, to develop their leadership skills and fulfil their potential. It can take the form of a study tour or placement. Applications are being called for the 2007 Fellowship. Closing date for applications is Friday 23 March 2007. Detailed guidelines and application form are available at: www.brianrobinsonfoundation.org.au. Contact: executive.officer@brianrobinsonfoundation.org.au. *EnviroInfo*

Master of Environmental Management – Online Course

The Master of Environmental Management at Edith Cowan University is designed to build the skills and knowledge necessary to integrate environmental planning, conservation and monitoring into the broader decision-making of organisations.

Specialisations include: Marine and Freshwater Systems, Industrial and Urban Systems, Sustainable Development, Natural Systems and Sustainable Water Resources Management.

- Fully online
 - Upgrade or gain professional qualifications while working
 - Can be completed in 18 mths fulltime
- Normal admission requirement is a degree, in any discipline, from a recognised tertiary institution. Applicants without a degree will be considered if they have at least five years relevant work experience.

For more information visit: www.sons.ecu.edu.au/courses/MEnvMgt/, e-mail sons@ecu.edu.au.

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