



## Bulleen Arts and Garden — CAWS 'Weed Wise' retail nursery of 2007

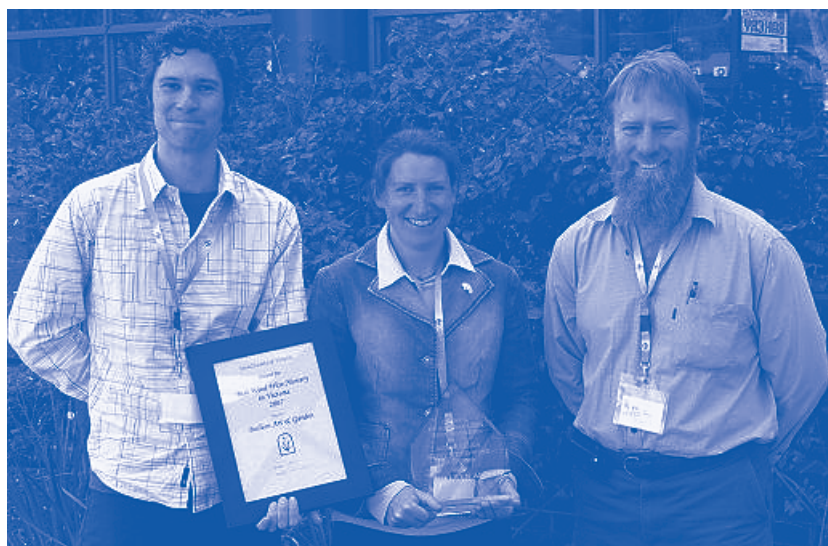
In 2006 CAWS established two new annual awards for the most 'Weed Wise' retail nurseries in Australia and in New Zealand. The purpose of the awards is to create awareness of invasive garden plants and to give positive publicity to retail nurseries that remove invasive garden plants from sale, support appropriate labelling schemes and educate customers.

Nurseries are assessed by the state Weed Societies against the following criteria:

- The voluntary removal of invasive species;
- The sale of local native flora;
- The standard of labelling of plants including the use of the correct scientific name, and identification of potentially invasive species;
- Industry accreditation;
- Policy on invasive species and/or related issues;
- Participation in schemes such as 'Grow Me Instead';
- Education of customers about environmental issues, including invasive species.

The nominations from each of the states then compete for the national award. This year Bulleen Arts and Garden won the nomination of the Victorian 'Weed Wise' retail nursery and went on to successfully win the Australian award. Ken Young, WSV president, presented the Australian CAWS 'Weed Wise' retail nursery of 2007 to Paul McMorran, the CEO of Bulleen Arts and Garden and Anna T. Johnson, the nursery manager at the Third Victorian Weed Conference.

On accepting the award, Paul said, 'The greatest challenge is educating ourselves and staying up to date with weed issues. We have made mistakes and will again but our aim is to continually improve. Education of the public through signage in the nursery has helped to improve their knowledge.' Anna encouraged those attending the conference to target plant buyers with the necessary information to help them to do their job better.



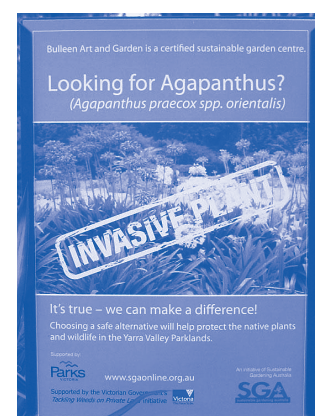
Paul McMorran, CEO and Ann T. Johnson, Nursery Manager, Bulleen Arts and Garden celebrate with Ken Young their win as Australian CAWS Weed Wise Nursery 2007

Anna reinforced Paul's message saying, 'At Bulleen Arts and Garden we try to educate the public in a low key way, by removing a plant for sale and offering a suitable alternative. If the suggested replacement plant is more environmentally friendly and suitable then we are all happy and stopping weeds from invading.'

The nursery regularly updates its internal weed species lists to reflect the latest research. The lists are used by all plant buyers and are accessible to all staff and customers via the website together with the nursery's environmental and weed policies.

Plant species indigenous to the Yarra Valley region and propagated from locally collected seed (from a few dedicated growers), have been stocked by the nursery for the last 8 years. The nursery seeks to raise the profile of local species with the general gardening public through the distribution of local municipal information, signage in the nursery and its website. Bulleen Arts and Garden is a Sustainable Gardening Australia accredited nursery.

The nursery staff and the nursery's owners see themselves as part of the local community and environment, and



An example of the weed wise signage used at Bulleen Arts and Garden

take active role in weed control and other local environmental issues. Over the last twelve years they have participated in an ongoing revegetation project of parkland adjacent to the nursery and over the last four years have contributed to the weed management of the Little Bolin Billabong (approx. 10 acres). Bulleen Art and Garden were recently recognised for their local commitment winning the National Nursery & Garden Industry Australia Community and Environment Award.

Lisa Minchin

## WSV's Third Biennial Conference – Earth Wind Fire Water and Weeds

The Weed Society of Victoria presented its third Weeds Conference, themed 'Earth, Wind, Fire, Water and Weeds', on the 3rd and 4th of October 2007 at the All Seasons International Hotel in Bendigo.

This conference proved to be another successful activity initiated by the Weed Society of Victoria, with approximately 120 speakers and delegates attending the two day event. The conference discussed many elements of 'Earth Wind Fire Water and Weeds' including each area's impacts on weed spread and management, and many other topics relating to weed control in Victoria. Highlights of the speakers' contributions are provided below.

Rick Roush discussed the future of weed management within the context of the changing environment, and Darren Kriticos discussed climate change and what would need to happen in weed management as the weeds from the North begin to migrate to the South.

It was proposed that the simple garden plant may no longer be just that, as some garden plants are causing major problems for both industry and public land managers. The Victorian Government's past initiative *Tackling Weeds on Private Land* was discussed, specifically the relevant processes and procedures, and the project evaluation on how to help manage weeds on private land. The new initiative *Improving Provincial Victoria's Biosecurity* was outlined. This initiative aims to reduce the risk of new weed introduction in Victoria, by working with and educating communities that have been identified as being high risk (in terms of new species introduction).

Details of the Victorian Weed Alert Program were discussed, with information supplied on how the program is progressing, particularly in relation to the eradication programs of Victorian State Prohibited Weeds Horsetails and Knotweeds. Other presentations under the Weed Alert programs detailed how incursions are managed and how members of the general public are helping with the fight against weeds by becoming Weed Spotters, and reporting new incursions of both State Prohibited and Victorian Alert weeds.

Research and control techniques for Chilean Needlegrass and Willows - which are Weeds of National Significance (WONS) - were reported on. Innovations in spraying techniques have shown that less herbicide is required with improved nozzles on spray machinery. The use of gel herbicides was also raised as another potential tool for the control of some noxious



Ken Young, WSV president (centre) with Rick Roush (left), University of Melbourne and Darren Kriticos, Ensia, the keynote speakers at the conference

and environmental weeds. Opportunities to improve weed management in shire council regions were identified, specifically through roadside and reserve mapping.

Throughout the conference it became clear that there is a need for an Australia-wide system for the declaration of noxious weeds. This would ensure that a declared noxious weed in one state could not be traded in another and would help to prevent new incursions of weeds entering from across the borders. The need for the garden industry to correctly label plants and empower and educate gardeners about invasive garden plants was also highlighted as an opportunity to help gardeners make informed choices when buying garden plants.

The role of the National Herbarium of Victoria in the fight against new weed

incursions was discussed, with emphasis placed on the importance of new incursions being lodged with the herbarium. If an incursion is found early, then the likelihood of eradication is maximised.

Other highlights from the conference included the CAWS Weed Wise Nursery Awards and the conference dinner. Following the theme of 'responsible nurseries', the award for the most Weed Wise Victorian Nursery was awarded to Bulleen Arts & Garden, who consequentially also won the CAWS 'Most Weed Wise Nursery in Australia' award as well. The conference dinner was a good chance for delegates to network and also ask the speakers questions that could not be covered in the allocated time.

Sarah Partington

### Conference Feedback

Conference attendees were asked to provide feedback about what they thought was good about the conference, what they thought was not so good and suggestions for future conferences. The feedback is summarised below and will help shape the 4th Victorian Weeds Conference in 2009.

Highlights of the conference were considered to be the:

- opportunity for networking and making contacts;
- diversity of topics, and the organisation and structure of the conference;
- quality of presentations. Special mentions included David Blair, Charlie Pascoe, Colin Hocking, Karen Jones and Darren Kriticos;
- exhibitions and displays;
- good venue and food (see also below);
- friendly atmosphere.

Areas for improvement were considered to be:

- information on the WSV website about the conference;
- the range of backgrounds of those attending. People from Catchment Management Authorities were thought to be poorly represented as were farmers, landholders, Landcare;
- repetition of information in one session of the program;
- food at the conference dinner.

Suggestions made included:

- having shorter presentations or case studies, workshops or a field trip in the afternoon to combat the fatigue many felt;
- more information on cropping and horticultural weeds;
- having greater scientific evidence in some cases, while others wanted greater emphasis on practical applications of new findings and case studies;
- funding incentives to improve the diversity of attendees.



## President's update

Since our last newsletter, the WSV has held its 3rd biennial conference – Earth, Wind, Fire and Water. The conference was very successful in a) providing information to the audience, b) invigorating the interest in weed management. We even had three people attend the conference due to the media coverage surrounding the conference; and c) financially for the WSV. The feedback from the conference, outlined on page 2, has been taken on board by the committee and we shall endeavour to incorporate the suggestions into the next programme.

Presently the committee is working on the next seminar *Commercial weeds – Roles, responsibilities, and innovations* which will be held on the Thursday 17 April 2008 at DPI Attwood. See the handout in this issue for more details.

We are also working on a strategic management plan for the Society to ensure that the society has a clear focused future addressing the issues that its members believe it should. A draft of the plan will be sent to each member for comment early in 2008.

Ken Young

## WSV Travel grants – Applications wanted

In January 2007 the Executive Committee revised the WSV travel grant guidelines in an effort to provide more opportunities for members to attend weed conferences. The key changes to the guidelines were:

- Up to two grants can be issued each year
- Grants were no longer restricted to attending the Australian Weeds Conference but could be used to attend other conferences within and outside of Australia
- It is no longer a requirement that the recipient of the grant presents a paper.

To date NO eligible applications have been received. An eligible application is one from a WSV member to attend a conference on weeds. The maximum grant per recipient is \$1500. WSV members are encouraged to apply for support to attend a conference. You can download the WSV

travel grant guidelines and relevant application forms from our website: [www.wsvic.org.au](http://www.wsvic.org.au) under the 'grants' tab or email Ros Shepherd, Secretary at [secwssv@surf.net.au](mailto:secwssv@surf.net.au). The closing date for applications is **28 February 2008**.

## Group travel to Australian Weeds Conference

The 16th Australian Weeds Conference will be held in Cairns from 18 to 22 May 2008. Are you interested in the possibility of cheaper travel or accommodation through a group booking? WSV is prepared to examine the options! If you are interested, please email your details to Ros Shepherd, Secretary [secwssv@surf.net.au](mailto:secwssv@surf.net.au) by 20 December 2007.

## Nominations for 2007

### Weed Management Award

Nominations for the 2007 Weed Management Award are now open. Nominees must have made a significant contribution to the management, science, technology, promotion or practice of weed management. Nominations can be made by one or more people but at least one nominator must be a WSV member. Nominations close on the **28 February 2008**. Nominations will be considered by the WSV president and 2 members of the Executive Committee and the winner will be presented with the award at the WSV Commercial Weeds Seminar on Thursday 17 April 2008.

## Letter from the Editor Changes to Weedscape

Dear *Weedscape* reader

From 2008, *Weedscape* will be upgraded to a colour publication and expanded to 12 pages to allow for more articles on weeds and their management. It will be made available both as a pdf and as hard copy quarterly from February.

The Weed Society of Victoria will also keep you up to date with events and conferences through regular (every 6 weeks or so) emails, which we are informally referring to as *eWeedscape*.

**Please be sure to provide your email address** to the WSV secretariat if you have not already done so. If you do not have an email address and wish to receive a hard copy of the email updates, please contact the WSV secretariat.

If you are interested in being part of the editorial team, currently comprising Sarah Partington and myself (with support from the Executive) or if you would like to write a letter to the editor, have an article or item of interest, or even you wish to have listed please contact me on 0437 233 193 or email [lminchin@tpg.com.au](mailto:lminchin@tpg.com.au). Your feedback is also welcomed and will help those of us volunteering our time, to do it effectively and keep us motivated as we make these changes!

**NOTE:** I have had a special request to include weed related jokes and cartoons to help make weeds more sexy and fun. Some conference dinner attendees spoke about Gorse Corsets offering weed protection, Chilean Needlecraft, Bone Weed... As you can see, help is needed... anybody?

Cheers

Lisa Minchin

## Weed Society of Victoria AGM Seminar



### Commercial Weeds: *Roles, responsibilities and innovations*

**9 am – 4 pm Thursday 17 April 2008**

**DPI Attwood**

**Seminar followed by AGM • All welcome**

**[www.wsvic.org.au](http://www.wsvic.org.au)   [secwssv@surf.net.au](mailto:secwssv@surf.net.au)**

## WEEDS IN BRIEF

### Free Chilean Needlegrass brochure

A new 8 page fold-out national management brochure on Chilean needlegrass is now available, containing a summary of CNG best practice information including

- impacts and distribution
- biology and seed spread
- identification (both when in seed and when not in seed);
- management (incl. control programs for agriculture, native grasslands, linear reserves).

Printed copies may be ordered on the Weeds Australia website: [www.weeds.org.au/Chileanneedlegrass](http://www.weeds.org.au/Chileanneedlegrass) or by emailing Kelly Snell, National CNG Coordinator with full postal/delivery details: [kelly.snell@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:kelly.snell@dpi.vic.gov.au) (ph: 03 5226 4625). Large orders may attract a postage charge.

### Free DVD on Managing Lantana

The DVD 'Battling Lantana: learning from the experiences of others' was launched in Queensland on 19 October 2007 by Senator The Hon. Ian Macdonald. The launch included education sessions on best practice management, fire management and bush regeneration. For a free copy contact: [lantanaWoNS@dpi.qld.gov.au](mailto:lantanaWoNS@dpi.qld.gov.au).

### The status of introduced flora

A new Weeds CRC electronic publication lists over 28,000 introduced plant species and their weed status. Written by Rod Randall, a total of 29,430 plant species are listed in this publication, including 606 Australian plants that have naturalised (i.e. reproducing without human intervention) outside their native range.

The introduced flora of Australia and its weed status is an invaluable resource to everyone who cares about the Australian environment and wishes to ensure that the plants chosen for revegetation projects, landscaping and gardens are not likely to become weedy and a threat to our bushland. Every introduced plant species in Australia, past and present, is listed in this publication, with information on its weedy status here and worldwide. To view the publication visit: <http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/publications/index.html>

### New weed management guides: managing weeds for biodiversity

Two new weed management guides are now available on the Weeds CRC website: African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) and Coolatai grass (*Hyparrhenia hirta*); the first of eight in this new series. These new guides emphasise the importance of managing weeds for biodiversity outcomes.

Three key areas of preparation are emphasised:

1. know the weed and its biology
2. know the range of methods for removing it
3. know the site including the condition of the native vegetation.

More information: [http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/publications/weed\\_man\\_guides.html#biodiversity](http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/publications/weed_man_guides.html#biodiversity); [http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/projects/project\\_4\\_2\\_3.html](http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/projects/project_4_2_3.html)

### Early detection of aquatic weeds workshops

The Aquatic Weed Early Detection Project is an initiative of the National Aquatic Weed Management Group and is funded by the Australian Government Defeating the Weeds Menace Program and the NSW Department of Primary Industries. The project aims to increase the early detection of aquatic Weeds of National Significance in three key areas of Australia including the north central regions of Victoria. There are three components to the project:

- the development of informal early detection procedures for community members, field staff, regular users of waterways and others
- increasing the capacity of weed control authorities to assess aquatic weed risk and to conduct surveys at high risk sites
- incorporating aquatic weed observations and methodologies into routine water monitoring and reporting protocols.

Workshops on 'Recognising Weeds in Our Waters' are being conducted in 2007–2008. For further information about the workshops and the Aquatic Weed Early Detection Project contact Fiona.mcpherson@dpi.nsw.gov.au or 02 66401692.

### 'The Weedy Truth About Biofuels'

The Invasive Species Council (ISC) has released a new report 'The Weedy Truth about Biofuels'. Written by ISC Project Officer Tim Low with Carol Booth, the report exposes the weed risks of many proposed biofuels, and finds that most plants being promoted as biofuels in Australia are serious weeds that should not be grown. The report examines the weedy risks posed by 18 proposed biofuel species being touted as climate change solutions, and recommends reforms to policy to reduce the weed risk of the emerging biofuels industry in Australia. The full report can be downloaded from [www.invasives.org.au](http://www.invasives.org.au)

### Australian Weeds Strategy

The Australian Weeds Strategy (first developed in 1997 as the National Weeds

Strategy) provides a framework to establish consistent guidance for all parties, and identifies priorities for weed management across the nation with the aim of minimising the impact of weeds on Australia's environmental, economic and social assets. The original Strategy was revised by the Australian Weeds Committee, and endorsed as the Australian Weeds Strategy by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. The revised Strategy maintains the policy focus of the National Weeds Strategy, taking into account changes to the institutions, legislation, policies and programmes that support weed management in Australia. The strategy can be downloaded from: <http://www.weeds.gov.au/publications/strategies/weed-strategy.html>

### Defeating the Weeds Menace

The Government committed \$44.4 million over four years to 2007–08 for national action on Australia's most threatening weeds through the *Defeating the Weed Menace* programme. Measures include strategic on-ground control and management of weeds at a regional level, research into cost-effective weed management techniques and bio-controls for key target weeds.

\$3.9 million has been allocated to fund 38 new projects to tackle Weeds of National Significance including regional, state-wide and national projects.

A print advertising campaign was launched in September to raise awareness about invasive garden plants among gardeners. The campaign calls for gardeners across Australia to be responsible for the plants they grow, to properly manage garden waste and to prevent invasive plants spreading into the environment.

A new Government website, [www.weeds.gov.au](http://www.weeds.gov.au), is a resource to assist the public to identify invasive plants that are a problem in the area in which they live.

### Indigenous environment projects

Combating Weeds of National Significance, improving habitat for threatened and endangered flora, reducing soil and water salinity and protecting important Aboriginal art sites are just some of the latest activities being funded nationally through the Government's Indigenous *Working on Country* contracts. In Victoria, funding will enable indigenous people to provide a range of environmental services by the Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation including weed mapping and control through the Budj Bim environment and heritage rangers program. Further information: [www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr08oct307.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr08oct307.pdf).



## Weed Spotter network

The Weed Spotter network is a weed surveillance network where trained volunteers look out for and report serious new weeds to Victoria. The network is an essential component of the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Weed Alert program which recognises the environmental, economic and social value of preventing serious new weed introductions to Victoria and identifying and eradicating serious new weed infestations should they arrive.

Weed Spotters support Weed Alert by monitoring public parks, cemeteries, urban fringes, rubbish dumps, bushland, farmland, roadsides, rivers and creeks. They also find serious new weeds for sale in nurseries, markets, garden centres, catalogues and on the internet.

Weed Spotters come from a wide variety of backgrounds and include professional botanists, academics, environmental consultants and contractors, Government agency and local Government staff. Weed Spotters can also be members of the general community with an interest in plants including gardeners, farmers, teachers, students and members of community groups.

Since the beginning of 2007 Weed Alert has received 48 reports from registered Weed Spotters. Reports have included species such as *Alternanthera philoxeroides* (Alligator Weed) spotted in waterways, *Eichhornia crassipes* (Water Hyacinth) spotted for sale and in private gardens and *Equisetum* species (horsetails) spotted in private gardens.

There are a range of training activities and publications available to Weed Spotters to assist them to identify Weed Alert species. Training can include weed identification, collection of specimens and how to make Weed Spotter reports. Publications include a handbook, WEEDeck and subscription to a regular newsletter.

The Weed Alert program focuses on Weed Alert species which are State Prohibited and Victorian Alert Weeds. State Prohibited Weeds are declared weeds under the *Catchment and Land Protection (CaLP) Act 1994* and are illegal to buy, sell,



possess for sale, deposit onto land, display, plant, propagate, bring into or transport around Victoria. They either do not occur in Victoria or are already present but it is reasonable to expect that they can be eradicated. Their listing reflects the very serious harm these plants cause. Currently there are 25 State Prohibited Weeds. DPI is responsible for their eradication in Victoria and will arrange for treatment and removal when a report is made.

Victorian Alert Weeds are potential weeds of the future. They may pose a serious threat to Victoria's agricultural and natural assets or could affect human health. They may be naturalised in small numbers but are still eradicable or have not yet reached Victoria but present a potentially serious risk. Victorian Alert Weeds are a priority for further research through a Weed Risk Assessment (WRA) to better understand their potential impact and invasiveness and targeted surveillance by Weed Spotters to determine their distribution throughout Victoria.

Understanding the distribution of each species is a vital consideration for Weed Alert when developing management decisions. If you would like to register to become a Weed Spotter please contact the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

*Catherine McInerney*  
Department of Primary Industries

## Victorian Alert Weeds

The Weed Alert program within the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is focusing on potential, new and emerging weeds. One of these weed groups is Victorian Alert Weeds – our weeds of the future. Victorian Alert Weeds are under consideration for declaration under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. They pose a serious threat to Victoria's agricultural and natural assets or may affect human health.

Some of these weeds are thought to be naturalised in small numbers in Victoria but are still eradicable from the State, while others may not have not yet reached Victoria but present a huge threat if they were to arrive.

Victorian Alert Weeds are considered a top priority for further investigation. These weeds will undergo a detailed Weed Risk Assessment (based on invasiveness and impacts) to assess their seriousness, while Weed Spotters are being enlisted to assist in the validation of each species distribution throughout the State. Understanding the potential seriousness of each species and how wide spread they are is critical in informing appropriate management decisions.

In the next issue of Weedscape there will be a summary of particularly threatening species for the public to watch out for – Leaf Cactus (*Pereskia aculeata*). It is an example of a 'garden treasure' potentially coming to a paddock near you!



Leaf Cactus [Photo: DPI Victoria]

## Council chemical use

Has your council undertaken any work or considered the issues of chemical use for integrated pest and weed management? The MAV is keen to get a better understanding of the current council activities and interests surrounding this issue. Contact Pablo Brait (03) 9667 5529, [pbrait@mav.asn.au](mailto:pbrait@mav.asn.au).

# Wiki-Weeds: the treatment of Victorian weeds by an internet-based encyclopedia

Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>) is a web-based encyclopedia that began in 2001. Unlike traditional encyclopedias, anyone with access to the internet can view, create or edit articles on almost any topic in more than 100 languages. I had been ignoring Wikipedia as a source of useful information for many reasons, but mostly because of the perceived lack of critical review and also the ability of any user to vandalise an article or distort it to suit their own agenda. However, when I heard that the journal *Nature* recently compared the accuracy of 42 scientific articles from Wikipedia and from Encyclopedia Britannica (*Nature* 2005. 438:900-1) and found that the former had only slightly more mistakes per article (average 3.86 compared to 2.92), I was intrigued.

So, with over two million English language articles, how does Wikipedia cover the weed issues faced by Victoria? Would a student, land manager or other information seeker be able to find useful weed information within Wikipedia? I decided to put it to the test.

To begin, I selected fifteen weeds of Victoria, including trees and shrubs, herbaceous and succulents, grasses and creepers. I found that ten of these 15 species had their own individual Wikipedia article (Sycamore Maple, Cootamundra Wattle, Olive, Butterfly Bush, Coastal Tea-tree, St. John's Wort, Paterson's Curse, Tradescantia, Cleavers, English Ivy), while the remaining five species were covered within broader Wikipedia articles written at the Genus level (Mirror Bush, Sea Spurge, Quaking Grass, Annual Veld Grass, Caterpillar Grass). None of the five genus-level articles identified the tendency of one or more of the species within the genus to become weeds. For the ten weed species that did have their own Wikipedia article:

- The Plant Project Group (an interest group comprising registered Wikipedia users who aim to maintain and improve the ~25 000 plant-related articles in Wikipedia) had rated three of the articles as being of Mid Importance and two as Low Importance; these being the two lowest classes for assessing the Importance of plant articles. The remaining five articles had not yet been rated for Importance.
- The Plant-Project Group had rated three of these articles as Start Class and four articles as Sub Class; the two lowest classes for assessing the quality of plant articles. The remaining three articles had not yet been rated for quality, but I would expect that

they would fall into one of these two classes.

- Encouragingly, all 10 of the articles noted that the specific species could become weeds. Five articles noted that the species was a weed within Australia, and one species was noted to be a weed within Victoria. Almost all of the 10 articles contained at least some information on the plants reproductive biology (and therefore how it might spread), although mostly in very little detail. Three articles contained some information on how the species could be controlled.
- Four of the 10 articles had reasonable descriptions of the morphology of the plants, although even in these four articles the information was occasionally inaccurate or contradictory.
- Nine of the 10 articles contained at least one photo of the plant species.
- These 10 articles each contained an average of 7.8 references to either books, journal articles or website links (range 0 to 29), although on average only 0.8 of these references were about the weed-tendencies of the plant.

I also checked the accuracy of the information presented within the most comprehensive article (i.e. Paterson's Curse). Within the first paragraph, there were three errors relating the basic description of the morphology of the plant, each of which were correctly contradicted later in the same article. There were also at least 15 unreferenced claims, most of which I was able to verify through checking respected weed guides. A link to a web-site containing the transcripts of an ABC radio program interview about Paterson's Curse was the only reference used to support a claim within the article.

Obviously, I was disappointed (if not entirely unsurprised) that the 15 selected Victorian weed species were so poorly covered in Wikipedia. A subsequent quick search across Wikipedia for information on each of the 20 Weeds of National Significance (WONS) found that they were similarly under-developed as articles (and in some cases, even poorer).

I decided to look more broadly. The most useful information I could find on Australian weeds was from a Wikipedia article titled 'Invasive Species of Australia', which included a section on invasive plants. This section contained the list of the 20 WONS and the states in which they occur, other weed information plus links to other Wikipedia articles about the

CSIRO, AQIS and CRCs. It also contained links to other relevant external web-sites. But, overall, was still a very basic treatment of weed issues facing Australia.

At the time of writing this review, I conclude that Wikipedia is a poor source of information about the weeds of Victoria and Australia. Weed guide books, scientific articles and relevant government and non-government web-sites are a far more comprehensive and accurate sources of weed information. However, Wikipedia is an evolving beast, and some of the articles discussed within this review may already be updated and improved by the time you read this. Wikipedia should not be ignored as a potentially useful tool for disseminating information on the weeds of Victoria, as it is one of the most visited sites on the web, and one that people are increasingly using as a first contact when trying to find out information about a new topic. I can see great opportunities for weed enthusiasts (and wannabe authors) to develop and improve Wikipedia articles so that people using Wikipedia to learn about Victorian weeds can at the very least be directed towards appropriate websites or other primary sources of information.

(At present, there is no Wikipedia article on the 'Weed Society of Victoria' or any other weed society, and as far as I can tell, no other Wikipedia article makes any reference to it. Wouldn't it be great to have an article on the Society, detailing all the things the Society has achieved, listing past and future conferences and with a link to the WSV website? Are there members out there prepared to take on this challenge?)

Chris Timewell

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## Weeds after the Tsunami

In the wake of the tsunami that struck southern Asia in 2006, weeds are invading. In coastal districts of Sri Lanka, prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia dillenii*), mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*), lantana (*Lantana camara*) and Siam weed (*Chromolaena odorata*) are spreading in coastal scrublands, mangroves and within shore vegetation.

The cactus in particular is threatening the nesting habitats of five species of threatened marine turtle. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has initiated a control program targeting prickly pear and mesquite.

From *Global Invasive Species Program News* ([www.gisp.org](http://www.gisp.org))



## Weed IDentity: Ros Shepherd

### An interview with the WSV Secretary Extraordinaire

In 1969 Keith Turnbull Research Station advertised a position for an entomologist to work on the rabbit flea as a vector of myxomatosis. Ros Shepherd answered the call and moved from Brisbane to Frankston putting her experience and Master of Science in Entomology (and later, a Master of Agricultural Science in Animal Ecology) to good effect. The first half of Ros' career was spent working on rabbit control until the opportunity to work on *Chondrilla juncea* (skeleton weed) arose. This allowed the beginning of a new career in weeds, commencing with work on a biological control for skeleton weed. A widespread weed of crops, roadsides, waste and disturbed sites, it is particularly troublesome in sandy soils and the semi-arid regions in northern Victoria. It is also present in most other states and territories of Australia. It is a problematic weed for farmers because it takes moisture from crops and jams harvesters. With Ros' understanding of the relationship between insects and plants the transition to working on weeds was a smooth one.

It was during Ros' early career in weeds that her skills – in particular her eye for detail – were observed by others working at Keith Turnbull Research Institute (KTRI) and who were involved in the Weed Society of Victoria (WSV). With a little encouragement Ros joined WSV and was immediately elected to the position of secretary. That was in 1986. The only time off Ros has had from the role was when she did a two-year stint as president in 1993 and 1994.

Although Ros retired from the public service 12 years ago – it could be said that weeds continue, in their way, to invade her personal space. Apart from the role of WSV Secretary, Ros has worked on a number of books together with Bob and Fiona Richardson (the plant publications specialists and the designers and typesetters of 'Weedscene'). Ros and Bob met when they both worked at KTRI and spent many years together on WSV executive committee. Their first project was editing, together with Richard Groves, 'The Biology of Australian Weeds' Volume 1 (1995). Volume 2 followed in 1998. 'Plants of Importance to Australia: a checklist' (2001) was next, which updated the 1979 'Plants of economic importance to Australia'. Ros'



abilities as a photographer together with her writing skills were put to use in 'Pretty but Poisonous', an illustrated guide to plants which may be poisonous or cause allergies or skin reactions in people. The most recently published work of the partnership, launched last year at the Australian Weeds Conference in Adelaide, is the 'Weeds of the South-East: An identification Guide for Australia'.

Ros is currently in the thick of her next project, to write and illustrate a book on poisonous plants common to farms and gardens, and later to develop fact sheets for a DVD on weeds and potential weeds, an expanded version of the 'Weeds of the South-East', which will include additional photographs and more detailed descriptions to aid identification.

Ros' contribution to the Society can't be measured. As WSV secretary Ros has among other things, the lead responsibility for organising seminars, events and the biennial WSV conference. There is always the anxiety caused by last minute RSVPs – but the events are a great success and provide the opportunity for those with an interest in weeds to network, exchange ideas and keep up to date with the latest research.

Time off from working on weeds tends to come when Ros leaves the country and gets completely away from the computer and phone. She is well-traveled – southern Africa, India, Bhutan, south-east Asia, Europe and a stint working in South Africa. Ros is currently traveling in Vietnam, Yunnan, a province of China and Myanmar (Burma) enjoying a well-earned recovery from organising the WSV conference.

Lisa Minchin

## WSV endorses Earth Charter



The Weed Society of Victoria has recently endorsed the Earth Charter. The Earth Charter is a widely recognised, global consensus statement on ethics and values for a sustainable future. Developed over a period of ten years, in what has been called the most extensive global consultation process ever associated with an international declaration, the Earth Charter has been formally endorsed by over 2,500 organisations representing millions of people, including global institutions such as UNESCO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). After learning about the Earth Charter, the WSV Executive Committee unanimously agreed to the endorsement.

The principles of Earth Charter include:

- Respect and care for the community of life, including a recognition of the value of all forms of life, their interdependence and the need to secure earth's bounty for present and future generations.
- Ecological integrity, including controlling and eradicating non-native or genetically modified organisms harmful to native species and the environment and the prevention of introduction of such harmful organisms.
- Social and economic justice.
- Democracy, non-violence and peace.

The charter concludes with the way forward being based on a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility to support the implementation of the Earth Charter principles with an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.

Recently national, state and city governments have also begun to make formal commitments to the Earth Charter. The Queensland Government has made a formal public commitment to implement the charter in major policies and programs. The Earth Charter can also be endorsed by individuals. Further information about the Earth Charter can be found at [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org).

## Conferences & Events

### 30 November – 3 December 2007

Asia Pacific Eco Health Conference, Deakin University, Burwood  
For further information see: [www.deakin.edu.au/events/ecohealth2007](http://www.deakin.edu.au/events/ecohealth2007).

### 5 December 2007

International Volunteer Day. A day to celebrate volunteers, who contribute to weed management.

### 22 January 2008

Blackberry Identification Workshop in Frankston at the Department of Primary Industries, 40 Ballarto Rd, Melways map 100 ref E6. For more information contact Penny Richards on 03 9785 0135 or Penny.Richards@dpi.vic.gov.au.

### 24 January 2008

Blackberry Identification Workshop in Wodonga at the Department of Primary Industries, 1 Mckoy Street (look for Border Mail building). For more information contact Lyn Coulsten on 0427 437439 or [lyn.coulsten@bigpond.com](mailto:lyn.coulsten@bigpond.com).

### 25–29 March 2008

International Conference on Biotic Plant Interactions, Brisbane, Australia. Early registration is available until 30th November 2007. Abstract submissions close 15 February 2008. For more information see [www.uq.edu.au/plants/icbpi](http://www.uq.edu.au/plants/icbpi).

### 31 March – 3 April 2008

2nd International Salinity Forum: 'Salinity, Water and Society – Global issues, local action', Adelaide, South Australia. For further information see [www.internationalsalinityforum.org](http://www.internationalsalinityforum.org) or email [conference@conlog.com.au](mailto:conference@conlog.com.au).

### 17 April 2008

Weed Society of Victoria AGM Seminar: 'Commercial Weeds - Roles, responsibilities and innovations' to be held from 9am – 4pm at DPT Attwood. Seminar followed by Annual General Meeting. All welcomed. For further information see [www.wsvic.org.au](http://www.wsvic.org.au) or contact [secwssv@surf.net.au](mailto:secwssv@surf.net.au).

### 18–22 May 2008

16th Australian Weeds Conference: 'Weed Management 2008 – Hot topics in the tropics', Cairns, Queensland. Further information: [www.16awc.com.au](http://www.16awc.com.au) or [16awc@eventcorp.com.au](mailto:16awc@eventcorp.com.au).

### 23–27 June 2008

5th International Weed Science Congress: 'Weeds – Local problem, global challenge', Vancouver, Canada. Information on deadlines for submissions of abstracts and registration procedures see <http://iws.ucdavis.edu/Second%20Circular%20IWS%20updated.pdf>.

### 29 June – 5 July 2008

2008 Joint Meeting of the International Grassland Congress and the International Rangeland Congress, Huhhot, China. Further information see [www.igc-irc2008.org](http://www.igc-irc2008.org) or email [secretariat2008@hotmail.com](mailto:secretariat2008@hotmail.com).

**DO YOU HAVE AN EVENT YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE IN THIS LISTING? PLEASE EMAIL [lminchin@tpg.com.au](mailto:lminchin@tpg.com.au) WITH THE DETAILS**

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***Copy Deadline for 'New Look' February 2008 Issue***

**Monday 7 January 2008**

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