

Fact Sheet

Invasive species



What are weeds?

Invasive species include many plants which are called weeds. A weed is a plant that has harmful effects on the economy, the environment, human health and amenity. Weeds can be native plants that have spread to different parts of Australia as well as plants that have been introduced from outside Australia.

Below are some examples of weeds that invade wetland ecosystems as well as nearby habitats on the fringes of wetlands such as Coastal Moonah Woodland.



African Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*)

This shrub is native to South Africa and is rounded, woody, very thorny and can reach up to 5m high. Large spines up to 15cm long occur on the main stems. Boxthorn has white flowers and shiny, orange-red berries which contain numerous tiny seeds which when eaten by birds, are spread easily. African Boxthorn can grow to a great size and dense infestations out-compete indigenous plants.



Boneseed (*Osteospermum moniliferum*)

This is a woody, erect shrub that can grow to a height of 3m and 6m wide. It has large green leaves with an irregular margin and bright yellow, daisy-like flowers that emerge in late winter and spring. Mature Boneseed plants can produce approximately 50,000 seeds per plant which are then dispersed by animals such as foxes and birds, as well as vehicles. Boneseed infestations eliminate understory species and can impact coastal plant communities.



Great Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)

This herb is native to western and central Asia and Europe and can grow up to 3m high. It has a large ring of leaves at the base which are covered in soft hairs. Bright yellow flowers emerge from a large flowering stem. This plant spreads via seeds and it is estimated that each plant can produce around 100,000 to 240,000 seeds which may be viable for up to 100 years. It can invade undisturbed ecosystems and has the potential to significantly alter the structure of plant communities.

Note: this species looks very similar to Salt Lawrenca (*Lawrenca spicata*), an indigenous species that is smaller and does not have soft hairs.

Fact Sheet

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Artichoke Thistle (*Cynara cardunculus*)

This thistle is native to the Mediterranean and is now widely spread throughout south-eastern Australia. The leaves are arranged as a large cluster of leaves on the ground and purple flowers appear along a stalk. Artichoke Thistle reproduces via seeds that are spread by the wind, animals, vehicles or when dumped. It can easily dominate and smother understory indigenous plants. There are many similar looking 'thistles' which can be hard to identify.



Spiny Rush (*Juncus acutus*)

This rush is native to Europe, Africa and the Americas and is a serious environmental weed and declared **noxious** weed in Victoria. This is a large, tough rush that reaches up to 1.5m tall and often grows in distinctive clumps. It has dense clusters of small reddish-brown flowers, or small hard reddish-brown nut-like fruits, near the tops of the stems. It spreads mostly by seed transport via water ways and and by people on machinery, soil. It is considered a serious weed due to its ability to produce abundant seeds and it's very pointed tips which make it difficult to control.



Willow (*Salix* species)

There are around 100 different species and varieties of Willows that have been introduced into Australia. They are deciduous shrubs or trees and are among the worst weeds in Australia because of their invasiveness, potential for spread, impacts and have invaded many wetland areas. The roots of willows can change the flow of water and can cause erosion. Most willows spread when stems or twigs break off and regrow, sometimes kilometers away.

Learn more

Agriculture Victoria: www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

iNaturalist Australia: www.inaturalist.org.au

Weeds Australia: www.weeds.org.au

Before you remove any weeds

on your property, make sure you are confident about the species. Use the above websites to find out more about local weeds and how to identify and control them.



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Invasive animals

Invasive animals pose a serious threat to biodiversity and ecosystems. They can result in loss of native animals, disturb, destroy or eat native vegetation and contribute to the spread of weeds. Current recognised invasive animals in Victoria include foxes, rabbits, feral pigs, feral goats and feral cats.



European Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

The Red Fox is native to Europe, Asia and North America and was introduced to Australia for recreational hunting. Foxes are elusive, adaptable and are found across a broad range of habitats including wetlands. Foxes usually live for 3 to 6 years but can live up to 10. Foxes have caused a severe reduction in populations of many species through predation. Research suggests that wetlands may have higher impacts from foxes due to the higher biodiversity value and edge effects (e.g., predation occurs more frequently along the waters edge).



European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

The European Rabbit is native to Southern France and Spain and was introduced to mainland Australia originally near Geelong. Rabbits now occur throughout Victoria in a range of habitats and can breed throughout the year if food is available. Rabbits create burrows called warrens and wetland habitats make ideal warren-creating conditions. Rabbits impact wetlands by grazing on indigenous plants, encouraging weed growth and disturbing and degrading soils.



Feral Pigs (*Sus scrofa*)

Feral pigs are native to Europe and Asia and are an adaptable species being omnivores, fertile and resilient. Feral pigs live to around 5 years and prefer to live in moist areas with dense vegetation such as wetlands. Pigs impact wetlands by feeding on and trampling native vegetation, spreading weeds and preying upon and competing with native animals.

Learn more

Agriculture Victoria: www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

Managing Wetlands Fact Sheets: www.water.vic.gov.au