

factsheet

Managing garden weeds

plants with large seed or fruit



Garden weeds: large seed or fruit

Weeds with large seed or fruit in gardens

Many plants with large seed or fruit can be spread by birds or other animals when they are ingested and then passed through the animal in its droppings. Seeds within fruits are often spread by birds (eg privet, olive). Seed-eating birds such as parrots and sparrows also spread weeds. Some examples of trees, shrubs, grasses and broadleaf weeds with large seed or fruit are listed in the table on page 2.

Weed dispersal by birds

Birds can transport weed seeds over large distances. They tend to deposit them during feeding and in their droppings. Weed seeds are commonly deposited at roosting points such as under trees, fence posts and birdbaths. Many weed 'escapees' are dispersed by birds and spread without the gardener being aware. The best way to prevent the spread of weeds by birds is to stop fruit- or seed-set, or remove them from the plant before the birds begin to feed on them.



Fruits and berries on plants are attractive to fruit eating birds. After ingestion, the seeds are passed in the droppings and seedlings may germinate long distances from their origin.

Propagule: method of multiplication or spread used by a plant to reproduce eg seeds, corms, vegetative parts, spores.

Fruit: contains the seed or seeds of a plant.

Managing weeds with large seed or fruit in the garden

Tactic Groups

There are a number of tactics that can be used to manage weeds in gardens. These tactics can be grouped according to their main aim and which part of a weed's life cycle is being targeted.

There are five Tactic Groups and these are outlined in the Weeds CRC factsheet, *Managing garden weeds: planning tactics*. These Tactic Groups aim to prevent new weeds entering the garden, kill the weed or simply stop the production and dispersal of propagules.

Allocating the various weed management tactics to one of the five Tactic Groups assists in planning a more successful garden weed management program.

Successful weed management relies on:

- using a variety of tactics from a number of Tactic Groups
- choosing the right tactics
- applying and timing tactics correctly.

Berry: a many seeded fleshy fruit.

VET sector resource: RTD5402A
Develop a strategy for the management of target pests.

Important tactics for weeds with large seed and fruit

The ultimate weed management plan will use a tactic from each Tactic Group. For weeds with large seed or fruit it is essential to include tactics from:

- Tactic Group 2: Kill and remove weeds (apply herbicide or dig whole plant)
- Tactic Group 3: Stop weed seed set (eg dead head or prune flowers before fruit and seed is set)
- Tactic Group 4: Prevent replenishment (seed or fruit) of the weed seedbank (eg collect and dispose).

Garden weed planner

A garden weed planner can be used to develop and outline a weed management plan. It identifies which tactics are suitable for use and which Tactic Group they belong to. Going to the effort of filling in the planner highlights gaps and any possible weakness in the plan.

An example garden weed planner for the fruit forming weed, privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*), is included as a

Examples of weeds with large seed or fruit			
Common name(s)	Scientific name	Method of spread or propagule	Comments
Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Berry Stems root at tips	Spread by birds and foxes. Harbours rabbits.
Boxthorn	<i>Lycium</i> spp.	Berry	Forms impenetrable thickets in neglected pastures and harbours rabbits.
Briar, sweet briar	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>	Fruit (hip)	Common weed of tableland pastures.
Burr medic	<i>Medicago denticulate</i>	Seed	Often running weeds of lawns and gardens that produce many small seeds within a large spiny burr. The burr can be attached to animals or clothing and transported long distances.
Cherry laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Berry	Seeds are spread by birds. The berries of this plant attract aggressive birds like the common myna and pied currawong.
Chinese tallow	<i>Sapium sebiferum</i>	Fruit Suckers	Forms dense thickets and replaces native vegetation. Problem weed in eastern Australia's coastal districts. Male and female trees (one female tree can produce more than 130 000 seeds).
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster</i> spp.	Fruit	Hardy, drought tolerant, readily spread by birds.
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus</i> spp.	Fruit	Introduced as garden or hedging plant. Infests open grasslands in colder regions of south-east Australia. Harbours vermin and hosts light-brown apple moth.
Lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i>	Fruit Stem fragment	Spread into bushland by fruit-eating birds and also by the dumping of garden waste; stems lying on moist soil will grow roots and form a new plant.
Olive, European	<i>Olea europaea</i>	Fruit	Readily spread long distances by birds. Adaptable and hardy, it dominates native bushland.
Paspalum	<i>Paspalum dilatatum</i>	Seed Short rhizomes	A perennial weed of lawns and seasonally wet areas. Sticky seeds attach to animals and clothing. It is drought tolerant but frost tender. A fungus attacks the seed causing ergot. The sticky exudate is harmful and poisonous.
Privet – small leaf	<i>Ligustrum sinense</i>	Fruit	Seed is spread deep into bushland by fruit-eating birds, both native and exotic, and is also washed down waterways, producing large numbers of rapidly-growing seedlings. Known cause of hayfever and suspected of being poisonous.
Privet – large leaf	<i>Ligustrum lucidum</i>	Fruit	One plant may produce up to a million seeds, which are spread into bushland by birds and are also washed down waterways. Known cause of hayfever and suspected of being poisonous.
Ryegrass	<i>Lolium</i> spp.	Seed	Annual or perennial species can be weeds in lawns and gardens. Allergies to the pollen are common.
Tree lucerne, tagasaste	<i>Chamaecytisus palmensis</i>	Seed	Hardy, drought tolerant, prolific seed production.
Wattles	<i>Acacia</i> spp. and <i>Mimosa</i> spp.	Seed	A few species can be adaptable and hardy and displace native vegetation.
Wild oat	<i>Avena</i> spp.	Seed	Annual weed species of lawns or gardens.



Management that reduces the fruit or seed production on plants such as (L-R) burr medic; olives; and Chinese tallow will assist in limiting the number of propagules that can potentially be dispersed by birds, animals or human activity.

case study in this factsheet. It illustrates a successful weed management plan using tactics from each Tactic Group and how to complete a planner to manage any garden weed problem. An individual planner should be used for each target weed.

Best garden practice

'Best garden practice' or management to favour desirable garden plants will also improve the success of any weed management plan. Best garden practice includes activities such as monitoring weeded areas, mulching, replanting weeded areas with desired plants and providing the required nutrients to encourage active plant growth.

Name: *Ligustrum lucidum*, broad-leaf privet, large-leaf privet, tree privet and glossy privet.

Brief description: a robust, vigorous, evergreen, fast-growing large shrub to small tree with dark glossy green oval leaves up to 13 cm long and a smooth margin. Leaves have a paler, dull undersurface. Small white tubular flowers are heavily-scented and produced in abundant clusters during summer. Flowers are highly allergenic.

Key propagules: blue-black berries in clusters persist into winter.

Method of spread: fruit-eating birds spread seed deep into bushland and it is also washed down waterways, producing large numbers of rapidly-growing seedlings.

Name: *Ligustrum sinense*, small-leaf privet, Chinese privet or hedge privet.

Brief description: a hardy, evergreen, fast-growing shrub (to 4 m high) previously used extensively for hedging. Leaves are oval up to 6 cm long with a pointed tip and often have a wavy margin. Drooping sprays of heavily scented white tubular flowers are produced in masses in spring. Flowers are highly allergenic.

Key propagules: blue-black berries in sprays persist into winter. One plant may produce up to a million seeds.

Method of spread: fruit-eating birds spread seed deep into bushland and it is also washed down waterways, producing large numbers of rapidly-growing seedlings.

Case study: managing privet in gardens

Planning privet management

The successful management of privet will depend on the tactics chosen, the timing of the tactics, where the weed is situated and the density of the infestation (eg few plants or many). Deciding how to best manage this weed can be assisted by filling in a garden weed planner. The following garden weed planner demonstrates how to approach the management of privet in a garden situation.

A blank garden weed planner can be found in the factsheet *Managing garden weeds: planning tactics*.



Privet produces numerous blue-black berries. These berries are attractive to berry-feeding birds who disperse the potentially millions of seeds across other gardens and bushland.

Garden weed planner		
Target weed: privet		Situation: garden
Method of spread: birds		Key propagules: berry
Tactic Group and aim	Tactic used	Information and timing of tactic
Tactic Group 1 Deplete the weed seedbank.	Rake and collect	Collect and dispose of berries on the ground before birds can eat them or they can be carried away in heavy rainfall.
Tactic Group 2 Kill and remove weeds.	Dig	Dig, weed or chip seedlings that emerge under common bird roosts eg fences, bird-baths.
	Apply herbicide	For shrubs and small trees (trunk up to 10 cm diameter) use cut and paint technique. For larger trees (greater than 10 cm diameter trunk) use tree (stem) injection. Apply herbicide to each stem of actively growing privet. Seek advice and read and follow label directions carefully before application. Note: For further information see guidelines on the Weeds CRC website: <i>Herbicides: knowing when and how to use them</i> and <i>Herbicides: guidelines for use in and around water</i> .

Garden weed planner		
Target weed: privet		Situation: garden
Method of spread: birds		Key propagules: berry
Tactic Group and aim	Tactic used	Information and timing of tactic
Tactic Group 3 Stop weed seed set.	Cut – prune	Prune (or dead head) flowers prior to fruit formation. Pruning prior to flowering will remove the highly allergenic flowers and stop fruit- or seed-set.
Tactic Group 4 Prevent replenishment of the weed seedbank.	Prune and dispose	Prune shrubs to remove fruit to avoid birds eating and spreading the seeds. Dispose of prunings/fruit carefully to avoid weed spread.
	Collect and dispose	Rake and collect fallen fruit and dispose of them prior to birds eating and spreading the seeds.
Tactic Group 5 Prevent introduction of weed seed from external sources.	Monitor	Monitor garden areas below likely bird-roosts for seedlings, particularly if you are aware of privet in the local area. Pull any seedlings while they are small to prevent privet establishing in your garden.
Best garden practice Implement best garden practice to favour desirable plants rather than the weeds.	Choose plants carefully	Encourage shading and colonisation of the area by desirable plants. Introduce competitive and desirable plants to the area where the weeds have been removed or encourage existing plants to colonise that area.
	Apply nutrients and water	Provide adequate nutrients and water to maximise the competitive ability of the desirable plants.
	Mulch	Mulch with materials such as thick layers of newspaper, straw, bark chips and gravel to keep desirable plants moist and roots cool during summer and improve plant competitive ability. A weed mat is also effective.
	Monitor	Check regularly for privet seedlings around bird roosting sites and weeded or disturbed areas. Control when small.



Fallen fruit from trees or shrubs can be eaten by birds and animals and the seeds dispersed great distances from the parent plant. Fruit should be raked up and bagged to prevent weed dispersal outside the garden fence.

For further information visit the Weeds CRC's website: www.weeds.crc.org.au

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Further reading: *What does your garden grow?* (a training resource developed by the Weeds CRC); other factsheets in the *Managing garden weed* series, Weeds CRC.



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