

VBTnews

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

REVISED VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY STRATEGY

The revised Victorian Blackberry Strategy (VBS) was released in October and is the road map for blackberry management for the next five years.

The VBS has been revised with valuable input from communities involved in partnership projects with the VBT over the last five years and from the Agencies who work with us. It clearly defines the extent of the impacts of blackberry and the diversity of measures needed to reduce the growth and spread of blackberry in Victoria.

These are the 'marching orders' for the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) which will continue to work to achieve the objectives.

Community education, skills development in best practice control methods and providing opportunities to access the latest information is a critical role for the VBT.

Field trips, demonstrations and information days across the State complement the resources on the VBT website. In 2014 community events held in Boolarra, Mt Best and Corryong were very well attended.

Supporting community blackberry management is also a focus of the VBS. The opportunity for communities to drive local programs has produced very impressive results on ground.



VBT MEMBERS, TONY JARVIS AND LYN COULSTON

Encouraging land managers to work together has been very successful in reducing re-infestations and maintaining treated areas.

The VBT also welcomes enquiries on any aspect of blackberry management. We can refer you to the appropriate information source if we can't help.



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Blackberryaction



ECO-BLADE TECHNOLOGY

BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUPS ARE BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE

Blackberry Action Groups across Victoria have been engaging land managers to improve program outcomes. Parks Victoria, councils, catchment management authorities and plantation companies are collaborating with communities driving blackberry control.

The Triangle Blackberry Action Group successfully collaborated with Murrindindi Shire and Parks Victoria. Murrindindi Shire has sprayed approximately 50km of roadside verge in response to activities by the blackberry action group. Parks Victoria also treated blackberry along the boundaries of public and private land in the Cathedral Ranges, with 5km of the boundary mapped and treated.

Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group gained assistance from South Gippsland Shire Council by sending correspondence to residents, outlining the group's activities last season to kick start the program.

Parks Victoria also supported the program by aligning its blackberry control with the group's activities. Significant blackberry control occurred at Nine Mile Creek last season and will continue this year. It also treated approximately 12km of land along public and private boundaries in the Cape Liptrap Coastal National Park.

The Up to Us Blackberry Action Group is building a strong relationship with the Mansfield Shire. The group has been allocated the responsibility to map roadside weeds by the council. This activity will again be undertaken for the 14/15 season. Not only is this helpful for the council but invaluable for the group in gaining a greater understanding of the blackberry issues on the interface of private land and roadsides.

BLACKBERRY ACTION Group Demonstrations

Merton to Cathkin, Up to Us, Triangle and Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Groups have all set up blackberry control demonstration sites which include the use of the 'Eco-blade' technology, traditional chemicals and a natural pine oil based product.

The Merton-Cathkin Blackberry Action Group demonstration site in Merton focuses on several foliar chemicals as well as the 'Eco-blade' technology. The 'Eco-blade' is towed by a tractor and its action slashes the blackberry to the ground and covers the stem with chemical (cut & paint on a large scale!).

The Up to Us Blackberry Action Group has also set up a demonstration site using the 'Eco-blade' and several foliar chemical sprays at Bonnie Doon. The site was treated in March 2014. A field visit was undertaken on November the 8th 2014, where preliminary results have seen little to no regrowth and 'Native Poa' regenerating after the 'Eco-blade' treatment.

The Corner Inlet Blackberry Action will complete the set-up of 3 different blackberry control demonstrations in mid-November 2014. The non-chemical product 'Bio-weed', which is a pine oil based product, will be used on the first site. The effectiveness of chemicals registered for use on blackberry will be demonstrated on the second and third sites.

Finally, the Triangle Blackberry has set up a 'Eco-blade' demonstration site at Narbethong, more details to follow soon.

As results from demonstrations become available we will publish these on our website and in future publications of the VBT newsletter.

COMMUNITY STORIES: Wayne McClinchie & Karyn Healy

As part of the North East Blackberry Action Group Forum on the 6th of November a case study was filmed highlighting Wayne McClinchie and Karyn Healy's challenges in taking over a blackberry infested property. The property purchased in October 2012 is located in the picturesque Upper Murray. Karen Healy says, 'We were always looking for a hobby farm to run chooks and other animals and the property was just what we were looking for'.

One of the barriers to overcome was the overgrown access tracks, but with help from the North East Blackberry Action Group (NEBAG), through incentives, they reopened and created tracks to spray blackberries. The couple believe that NEBAG, through the Project Officer and 3 year voluntary management agreement, has given them confidence to tackle this woody weed. 'Contractors were able to get in areas with their equipment that we couldn't.'

An integrated approach is being used, including chemical control, burning and revegetation. Wayne and Karyn are under no illusions on the job ahead. Wayne states, 'I didn't realise how big the job was until we started the control program'.



PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE BLACKBERRY CONTROL
KARYN HEALY & WAYNE McCLINCHIE

After the first two years they have reflected on their achievements and are very happy with the progress to date. They plan on increasing the amount of stock on the property. Wayne and Karyn realise that decreasing the amount of blackberry increases the productivity of the land. Wayne says, 'if we clear an acre of blackberry this means half a cow.'

Well done so far to Wayne and Karyn!

To view this video case study please visit our website at www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

NEW BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP



BLACKBERRY INFESTATION IN THE MALDON REGION

'A THIRD OF THE 4,400 HECTARE PROJECT AREA WILL BE TARGETED IN THE FIRST YEAR.'

We would like to welcome the Sandy Creek Woody Weed Action Group to the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce. The group is located in the Maldon region encompassing Sandy and Tarrangower Creek and their tributaries. The group steering committee is made up of the Sandy Creek Landcare Group, Maldon Urban Landcare Group, Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee, Connecting Country and Parks Victoria.

A third of the 4,400 hectare project area will be targeted in the first year, which will focus on signing 30 land managers to three year voluntary management agreements. Part of the program provides a \$50 incentive for plants for revegetation.

The group will engage with two major stakeholders: Parks Victoria, who is a major land manager in the area, and the Shire of Mount Alexandra for roadside management. With Parks Victoria and the Shire aligning priorities with the group's activities it will ensure better results for the project in future.

NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP FORUM

50 people attended the North East Blackberry Action Group Forum on November the 6th which showcased a variety of topics - legislative changes, biological control, chemical control, 'Bio-weed' and the effects of blackberry on property values.

Hugh Frith from Certified Organics presented detailed information on the product 'Bio-weed' as an alternative control measure for blackberry. The product's mode of action is physical as it strips the cell wall of the blackberry.

Dr Robin Adair from Australis Biological gave insightful presentations on biological and chemical control of blackberry. He discussed the success of the biological control 'rust' in certain areas making blackberry plants less robust. He also went on to outline future research into biological control. Dr Robin Adair's second presentation highlighted the importance of a well planned chemical control strategy - using the right chemical, the correct rate and the best conditions.

Mr John Burley from John Burley Consulting outlined the change to the Catchment and Land Protection Act concerning roadside pest management. Councils, for the purpose of the act, are now responsible for roadside pest management. From 2015 they will need to produce a roadside pest management plan that has community input.

Mr Michael Redfern, a property valuer from Preston Rowe Paterson, outlined the effects of blackberry infestations on property prices. He stated that large infestations reduce the price of a rural property significantly. Not only for the affected property, but surrounding property, whether or not they are blackberry infected. This takes into account the future cost of control to bring the property back to its original productive value.

The day finished with a bus tour visiting three landholders at Wabba Gap, Berringama and Cudgewa where they explained their own unique blackberry problems.



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