



UPPER RIVER TORRENS  
LANDCARE GROUP

# Data Sheet

# Woody Weed Removal

*Woody weeds such as gorse, blackberry, briar rose and others are undesirable plants growing in Australian watercourses. Gorse and blackberry are proclaimed weeds under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019, previously known as the Natural Resources Management Act 2004 and the Animal and Plant Control Act 1986, so there is an obligation on landowners to control them.*

These weeds have two deleterious effects on the environment:

- Firstly, they do not provide a good habitat for native animal and plant species and, in fact, tend to harbor exotic pest animals and:
- Secondly, it is our experience that, in most instances, these woody weeds do not, in themselves, hold banks together. In fact, perennial grasses and clovers do a much better job.

When attempting to eradicate woody weeds from watercourses, remember that these streams are dynamic parts of the eco-system and anything you do needs to be completed with great sensitivity.

For example, never remove woody weeds from watercourses unless you have a program organised to replace them.

Remember too that big changes can bring on big problems, so small changes over a longer period allow the watercourse to compensate for these changes and produce a more manageable and stable stream ecosystem.

Remember to correctly identify the woody weed species before removal as some weed and native species may look similar. There are many resources to assist with identification such as the SA Weed Control app and factsheets developed by several authorities so please seek advice and contact your local Landscape SA Officer if you are unsure. In addition, careful utilisation of chemicals within a watercourse sensitive environment for woody weed control must be considered to avoid adverse impacts to the waterway, native plant and animal species, so please seek advice before proceeding.

## Several strategies

In this bulletin, we outline several strategies for woody weed removal. They can be adapted to individual philosophies and management skills and have been developed to take advantage of the latest control techniques. These strategies take into account the vest time to seed or plant replacement vegetation and are sensitive to the delicate nature of a watercourse's ecosystem.

Four different strategies are presented and they differ slightly in their timing and costs. For example, strategy one, involving



*Watercourse infested with woody weeds*

burning then spraying regrowth, is much cheaper than where mature gorse is sprayed. Choose the control method best suited to your needs. Other strategies and variations can be used based on the four over the page, but the basic timelines should be adhered to.

**Initially it is vital for the success of the strategies mentioned to erect protective fencing.**

**In the short term, we cannot stress enough that exposed banks should be protected almost immediately. This means that some grasses will need to be established - either short-lived or perennial - to hold the banks (e.g. ryecorn, barley, short-rotation ryes, annual clovers).**

**Weather native grasses, shrubs, trees or a buffer of perennial pasture are eventually planted to replace woody weeds depends on the philosophy of the landholder.**

Remember, long-term strategies need to be developed to manage the watercourse once the woody weeds are removed.

Blanket recommendations have been given on herbicides but these need to be adapted for individual situations and to be site specific. Options are available for those who do not wish to use chemicals but they require a very large labour input. Contact your local Landscape SA Officer for the latest herbicide and/or alternative control recommendations for woody weeds.

### STRATEGY 1 (Using pasture grass)

- Early Spring Year 1 ..... Burn woody weeds
- Spring Year 1 ..... Seed banks with pasture grasses - avoid aggressive phalaris  
(See Pasture Establishment and Management datasheets)  
Fence to exclude stock (Refer to Fencing datasheets)
- Summer Year 2 - Autumn Year 3 ..... Spray gorse and blackberry regrowth
- Late Autumn - Spring Year 3 ..... Plant native shrubs and trees

### STRATEGY 2

- Late Autumn Year 1 ..... Spray mature woody weeds with a slow acting herbicide
- Winter Year 1 ..... Fence to exclude stock
- Using pasture grass or • Using native grass (Themeda)
- Late Autumn Year 2 ..... Seed bank with pastures  
December Year 1 ..... Harvest Themeda and lay on banks
- Spring Year 3 ..... Allow restricted grazing of stream  
Autumn Year 2 ..... Seed bank with annual pasture
- Alternate years after Year 3 ..... Spray woody weed seedling growth  
Early Spring Year 2 ..... Spray banks with Roundup and Pulse
- Spring Year 2 ..... Burn vegetation on banks
- Summer Years 2-3 ..... Themeda germinates
- Spring-Summer Year 3 ..... Spray woody weed seedling growth
- Autumn/Spring Year 4 ..... Plant native shrubs and trees

### STRATEGY 3 (Using sedges, rushes, reeds\* and grasses)

\* reed (*Phragmites*) by rootstock only

- Early Spring Year 1 ..... Burn woody weeds
  - Spring Year 1 ..... Fence to exclude stock
  - Summer Year 1-2 ..... Collect sedges, rushes and native grass seed<sup>+</sup>. Store it
  - Autumn Year 2 ..... Spray weed regrowth and other vegetation with Roundup and Pulse
  - Winter Year 2 ..... Scatter collected seed, plus divided plants, into weed-free areas
  - Late Spring Year 2 ..... Selectively spray out (or pull) broad leaf weeds
  - Spring Year 3 ..... Selectively spray gorse and blackberry regrowth
  - Autumn Year 4 ..... Plant native shrubs and trees
- (see photo bottom left)
- + *Rytidosperma* spp,  
*Microlaena*  
*Poa labillardieri*

### STRATEGY 4 (least preferred option - proceed with care)

- Spring Year 1 ..... Lay back banks with backhoe, removing gorse at the same time  
Fence to exclude stock. Into bank seed grass pasture or sedges, rushes, reeds and native grasses by seed and plant division. Install an alignment fence to support the bank while the revegetation establishes. (See photo bottom right)
- Spring Year 1 - Summer Year 2 ..... Spray gorse regrowth
- Autumn Year 2 ..... Plant native shrubs and trees



These rushes and tea tree were planted 2 years ago, and are now stabilising a collapsing section of bank and controlling an erosion head in the stream bed. Farther up both banks, naturally germinated red gum and manually planted wattle are further strengthening the riparian zone



An alignment fence will hold a collapsing bank together. Revegetation and stock exclusion will ensure long-term stability

### Resources

HerbiGuide: <http://www.herbiguide.com.au/>

PIRSA: [https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds\\_and\\_pest\\_animals/weeds\\_in\\_sa/weed\\_id](https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds_and_pest_animals/weeds_in_sa/weed_id)

[https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds\\_and\\_pest\\_animals/weeds\\_in\\_sa/weed\\_control\\_app](https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds_and_pest_animals/weeds_in_sa/weed_control_app)

Landscape SA H&F: <https://landscape.sa.gov.au/hf/plants-and-animals/pest-plants-and-animals/pest-plants>