Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*)

Weed management guide

Weed type
Herb

November 2022

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west

In NSW, weeds are regulated by the NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015. All land managers have a General Biosecurity Duty to contain the spread of weeds.

"General Biosecurity Duty means that any person dealing with plant matter must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable)."

The Regional priority for Fireweed is to protect assets from the weed's impacts and to prevent its arrival and establishment in the region. In order to achieve this, Land Managers are asked to: *Mitigate the risk of new weeds being introduced to their land. The plant should be eradicated from the land and the land kept free of the plant. The plant should not be bought, sold, grown, carried or released into the environment.*

For further information, contact your local Biosecurity (Weeds) Officer via Central West Local Land Services or visit NSW WeedWise.

NSW WeedWise

Habit and description

Fireweed is a branching annual or biennial herb which grows 10-60cm tall. It prefers growing on open areas like pastures and can grow in most soil types and in all aspect/direction. Fireweed has elongated leaves with a pointy tip and the margins of the leaf are serrated. The flowers of Fireweed are small, yellow, and can have up to 15 petals. Numerous seeds are produced by Fireweed which have white silky hairs that aid its spread through wind.

Photo: © B. Johnston | NSW DPI

Photo: © H. Rose | NSW DPI

Photo: © B. Trounce | NSW DPI

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Reproduction and spread

Fireweed reproduces by seeds and can produce over 25,000-30,000 per year (Parsons and Cuthbertson, 1992). These are easily spread by wind due to being small and light. The pappus (similar to those in dandelions) aid in its dispersal through wind currents. These can also be spread by grazing livestock as well as through transport of contaminated pasture seeds, hay, turf, and mulch. Majority of the seeds readily germinate in response to light and rainfall.

Impacts

Agriculture

- Fireweed contains chemicals (alkaloids) that are poisonous to cattle. Sheep and goats are more tolerant of its toxins.
- Common symptoms include reduction in weight and low production of milk. Severe poisoning can lead to death of livestock (Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, 2020).
- Toxins from the plant can taint the milk of a goat grazing on it. Goats for milk production should not be allowed to graze on areas infested with fireweed.

Native vegetation

- Fireweed is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) in Australia (NSW Department of Primary Industries, 2017).
- It can readily invade recently disturbed areas of native vegetation.
- It can outcompete native flora.

Management

Chemical

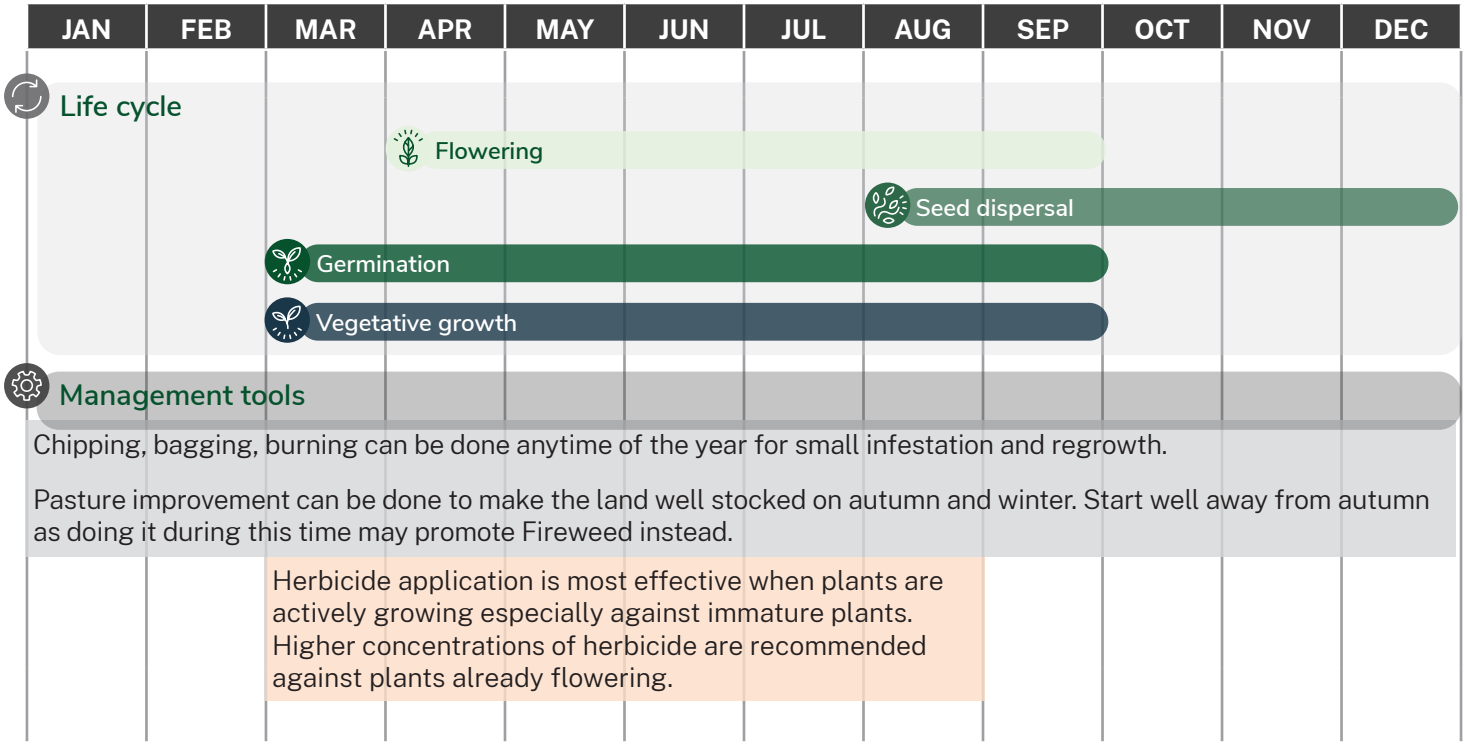
- The application of herbicides is most effective before Fireweed becomes mature as higher recommended rates of herbicide are needed against flowering plants.
- Boom spraying is an ideal method to use in open pastures but can also be used to a lesser extent in follow-up treatments.
- Spot spraying can also be employed for follow-ups.
- Seek the guidance of an experienced Weeds Officer for expert advice on herbicide use.
- Visit www.apvma.gov.au for a list of registered products, product labels and permit requirements.
- NSW DPI (2021) provides a list of recommended herbicides for the control of Fireweed at https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Fireweed.

Non-chemical

- Chipping, bagging, and burning can be used for small infestations or regrowth of Fireweed (The State of Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2020). These should be disposed in council-approved landfill tips.
- Slashing is **not** advisable as it will only delay flowering and seeding and may damage the pasture. This will open up more opportunities for Fireweed to spread.
- Ensuring dense cover of pasture grasses during autumn and winter will make it hard for fireweed to establish.

Weed type
Herb

Management calendar



Optimal control options may vary depending on your location and climate. Consult an experienced Weeds Officer based in your local government area for control methods suited to your conditions.

All herbicides must be used in accordance with the herbicide label and permit requirements.

NSW WeedWise

Further information

For more information on your general biosecurity duties, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity.

For the best guidance on how to meet this duty on your property, contact your expert Weeds Officer at your local council or via Local Land Services www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west.

References

Centre for Invasive Species Solutions. (2020). *Senecio madagascariensis*. Retrieved from Weeds Australia: https://profiles.ala.org.au/opus/weeds-australia/profile/Senecio%20madagascariensis

NSW DPI. (2017). *Weed categories*. https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds/weed-categories

NSW DPI. (2021). *NSW WeedWise*. https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Fireweed

The State of Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. (2020). *Fireweed (Senecio madagascariensis)*. Queensland Government. https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/67167/fireweed.pdf

Damian Wray
Biosecurity & Weeds Officer

Bogan Shire Council
81 Cobar Street
PO Box 211
Nyngan NSW 2825

P: (02) 6835 9000
F: (02) 6835 9011
E: damian.wray@bogan.nsw.gov.au
W: www.bogan.nsw.gov.au

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