



Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

March 2010

Are your weeds going wild in the wet?

Anybody who mows the lawn will be aware that this time of year is perfect for rapid plant growth. Many weeds are also growing fast, so it is important to keep up with them and to control unwanted plants before they flower or set seed, to save both time and money in the long term. Now is a good time to remove weeds by hand pulling, as moist, soft soil makes this easier. As plants are growing strongly now foliar spraying of herbicide is another method that may be appropriate. However, once sprayed plants need to remain dry long enough for the chemical to become rain fast and take action. This usually takes a few hours but varies between herbicides; refer to the label for instructions. You should also check now for new or unidentified weeds that have appeared since the last wet season. To assist with this PCL is working with Biosecurity Queensland and the Mackay Regional Council to hold three Weed Identification Field Days, for landholders to bring in their weeds and find out about best practice control options. *Please ensure that all weed samples brought to events are sealed in plastic bags, to prevent spread.*

Weed Identification Field Days

Weed Identification Field Days will be held as follows:

Gargett - Wednesday 24 March, 9am-10.30am, at the Gargett Rodeo Grounds (near public toilets)

Habana - Thursday 25 March, 9.30am-12noon, corner of Yakapari-Habana Road and Gardiners Road.
(Note: will run in conjunction with Pond Apple Field Day)

Hampden - Friday 26 March, 2.30pm-3.30pm, at Hampden State School (on the Bruce Highway).

All welcome! Call PCL on 4944 1979 for more details.



Giant Rat's Tail Grass Reminder

Travelling around our catchment it is clear that Giant Rat's Tail grass (GRT) is flourishing on many properties with the wet, warm weather. These weedy *Sporobolus* grasses are aggressively invasive, and as Class 2 Declared weeds landholders are required to contain and control if found on their property. Shelley Molloy, Pest Control Officer for Mackay Regional Council, recommends that landholders:

- Check headlands and laneways for presence of Rat's Tail grasses and other weeds, and if present take immediate control action;
- Maintain good weed hygiene, including inspecting materials/machinery entering property for weed seeds, requesting Weed Hygiene Declarations, and washing down vehicles regularly.
- Plan work and stock movement through infested areas to minimise risk of spreading infestation. For example, time for late afternoon to avoid morning dew, as moisture enables GRT seeds to stick to animals and vehicles.
- Maintain a 10m buffer around the perimeter of their property where weed has been controlled.

For more information on how to control GRT on your property, refer to 'Weedy Sporobolus Grass best practice manual', or contact your local Pest Control Officer on 1300 622 539.

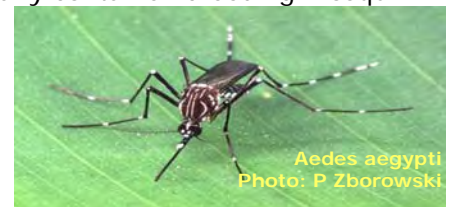
Stop Dengue Now! By Bren Fuller

Now is a good time to consider what we can do to protect ourselves against the dengue mosquito *Aedes aegypti*, a known vector of Dengue Fever in Australia. *Aedes aegypti* is one of many container-breeding mosquitoes that live in and around human habitation. This mosquito in particular prefers to lay its eggs in artificial containers that include rainwater tanks, blocked gutters, drain sumps, old tyres, bird baths, boats, wells, pot plant bases and flower vases. The adult prefers to rest in dark places like underneath elevated houses and even inside under the kitchen table.

Things we can do to prevent this species breeding around our home include;

- Remove unused containers like old tyres, tins, etc
- Screen openings on rainwater tanks
- Cover openings on wells and septic tanks
- Clean out bird baths every four days by wiping with a clean cloth and disposing cloth into the bin
- Fill pot plant bases with sand
- Ensure all water can drain from boats and gutters

For more information, see ABC Radio National Background Briefing 'Dengue Epidemic' (21/02/2010) - transcript and audio available online.



Aedes aegypti
Photo: P Zborowski



Find and remove unused containers
Photo: B Fuller

Pond Apple Alert in Habana!

Recently mature Pond Apple plants have been identified along a stretch of Leila Creek at Habana, giving rise to concern that plants may be more widely spread in the area. Landholders and residents of Habana and the wider community are strongly encouraged to attend the Pond Apple Field Day (see below) to learn more about this pest and what they can do to ensure it is eradicated from our region.

Pond Apple Field Day

When: Thursday 25 March, 9.30am-12noon

Where: Corner of Yakapari- Habana Rd and Gardiners Rd

What: This field day will cover practical Pond Apple identification and control, background on Pond Apple in the region, research and information about infestations in Nth QLD, and funding opportunities for landholders who find Pond Apple. There will also be opportunities for general weed identification and advice with representatives from Mackay Regional Council, QPI&F and PCL.

RSVP: Call PCL on 4944 1979 to register or for more information.



Weed of the Month

Pond Apple *Annona glabra*

Pond Apple is a major environmental weed of Far North Queensland, being both a Declared Class 2 Weed, and a Weed of National Significance (WONS). This small-medium tree invades fresh, brackish and saltwater areas and is easily spread within and between catchments. Pond Apple can invade relatively undisturbed areas, replacing entire ecosystems. Pond apple is also a pioneering plant, opportunistically invading areas after disturbances such as cyclones and floods.

Description:

Semi-deciduous tree that typically grows to 3–6m, but can reach 12–15m. Individual plants usually single-stemmed, but seeds germinating in groups can give a multi-stemmed appearance or fuse, giving the appearance of a single plant. Thin grey bark with prominent lenticels (pores that appear as small raised structures of cork-like composition). Native mangroves also have lenticels, which can confuse identification.

Leaves are alternate, 7–12cm long, with a prominent midrib. Upper surface of leaves varies from light-dark green depending on plant age, and paler underneath, with a distinctive small fold where leaf blade joins the leaf stalk. Leaves smell similar to green apples when crushed, distinguishing Pond Apple from mangroves. In the dry season the more mature leaves yellow, aiding detection.

Trees begin to flower after two years. Flowers are small, short-lived, pale yellow-cream, with three leathery outer petals, three smaller inner petals and a red inner base. The green fruit is spherical, 5–15 cm in diameter. Ripe fruit falls from the tree when yellow/orange, turning black on the ground; flesh is orange at maturity. Fruits contain 100–200 seeds similar in size and shape to pumpkin seed.

Management:

The two most cost-effective methods of managing Pond Apple are prevention of infestations and early intervention. While prevention is the best way to control weeds, this is not always possible as natural means (e.g. floods and animals) easily disperse seed. New infestations must therefore be quickly identified and controlled before they become widespread.

Control is best timed during the dry season when access to waterways and wetlands is easier. Control work should start at the top of the catchment or uppermost section of the waterway. This reduces risk of seed being transported into clean or previously treated areas downstream.

Control methods for Pond Apple include mechanical control, chemical control and fire. Often a combination of methods can be used to achieve effective control. Follow-up treatment is essential to identify missed plants, regrowth and any problems with the initial control method. Refer to QPI&F fact sheet for further details.

Source: QPI&F Fact Sheets



Committee Member Profile—Irene Champion

Irene Champion has had an interest in native plants all her life. A very strong passion (an obsession she would say) to know and understand the local flora led to considerable informal botanical study and field research. She has been involved in numerous vegetation surveys within this region over many years – both with Botanists from the Queensland Herbarium, as a casual employee of Queensland Parks & Wildlife and for various community organisations.

Irene is a life member of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region), a foundation member of the Mackay Branch and loves propagating Australian plants. She is kept busy as branch secretary and through her involvement with the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens. She also dedicates significant voluntary time to PCL through the Management Committee, as well as being on-call to provide technical information and advice on local native plants.

Upcoming workshops

Introduction to Biodynamics Workshop

When: Saturday 13 March, 9am-5pm

Where: Organic & Natural Store, 60 Yakapari-Seaforth Rd, The Leap

What: Workshop applicable for commercial operators and garden enthusiasts, introducing the use of biodynamic preparations to enhance the soil food web, creating fertility and balance in your soil. Biodynamics is a cost effective and personally rewarding method of producing high quality plants, food and fibre with regenerative ecological outcomes.

Cost: \$50 pp, \$80 per couple

Register: by 12 March. Contact Eric Hansen for details on 4954 0820.

On Farm Composting Course (3 days)

When: Tuesday 16 - Thursday 18 March, 8am-4pm daily

Where: The Walker's property, Brightley

What: FarmReady-approved course covering a range a topics from producing quality compost and marketing the product, to understanding soil health.

Cost: \$1500 (fully reimburseable through FarmReady)

Register: by March 10, contact Joe Garnham (0432 341 338) or John Ross (4954 1289) for details.



Participate in an online Forest Management Survey

Private Forestry Southern Queensland Inc. in conjunction with SEQ Catchments and the Central Queensland Forest Association is asking for freehold landholders in the Mackay region to complete a ten-minute online survey. This will help them to design an extension and education program relevant to the needs of people in our region.

Information provided is strictly confidential and will be used to assess landholders' eligibility for the incentive program. The Forest Management Survey can be completed via

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5NYNHBJ> or visit Re-veg.net.au and follow the links.

Plant of the Month

Native Mulberry *Pipturus argenteus*

Pipturus argenteus is a spreading, large shrub or small tree attaining a height of 10m. Male and female plants are separate.

LEAVES: Simple, margins finely and bluntly toothed, ovate to 12cm; three veined from base, dark green above, whitish beneath with velvety hairs.

FLOWER/FRUIT: Clusters of small white flowers occur at intervals along axillary spikes. Female plants produce small, white, edible mulberry-like fruits. A number of greenish-black nuts (1mm) can be found within the white flesh.

PROPAGATION: Collect fruits and gently squeeze, mix with sand, sow immediately.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rainforests, dry rainforest, wet sclerophyll and woodlands.

DISTRIBUTION: East coast of Queensland extending to Lismore, New South Wales and overseas.

GENERAL: Aborigines used a brown dye from the bark. Pacific Islanders used inner bark fibre to make nets. Edible fruits make it attractive to many bird species; it is also the larval food source of the Jezebel Nymph Butterfly and Hawk Moth.

Source: PCL Plant Information Sheets

Top-bottom: leaves, female flowers & fruits Images: S Robins, S&A Pearson



Who's who in Pioneer Catchment & Landcare?

Management Committee

Chair Margaret Lane

Deputy Chair Dave Hunter

Treasurer Joan Fitzsimmons

Secretary (Non voting) Tessa McDonald

Committee Members

Irene Champion

Cr. Wendy Cameron

Wendy Eiteneuer

Cr. Karen May

Dianne Williams

Coordinator Tessa McDonald
4944 1979

0447 749 769

admin@pioneercatchment.org.au

Project Officer Hayley Glover
0419 778 402

h.glover@pioneercatchment.org.au

Newsletter Tessa McDonald, Hayley Glover

Upcoming Events—March

Saturday 6, 8am—Morag McNichol Reserve working bee. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

Sunday 7, from 5.45am—MACBOCA excursion to Rocky Dam Creek. Meet at the Mackay Tourist Information Centre. Contact Marj Andrews on 4952 2964 for details.

Sunday 7, 8am-10am—Clean Up Australia Day with Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group. Site: Riverside Drive opposite Mackay North Pony Club. RSVP by calling PCL on 4944 1979.

Saturday 13, 9am-5pm—Introduction to Biodynamics workshop. Organic & Natural Store, 60 Yakapari-Seaforth Rd, The Leap. Contact Eric Hansen on 4954 0820.

Tuesday 16 to Thursday 18, 8am-4pm daily—On-farm Composting Workshop, Brightley. For more details contact John Ross (4954 1289) or Joe Garnham (0432 341 338).

Friday 19, 10am-12noon—PCL General Meeting, all welcome. Guest speaker Cr. Karen May will discuss Mackay Regional Council's sustainability program. Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens meeting room (back of information centre, Lagoon St).

Wednesday 24, 9am-10.30am—Gargett Weed Identification Field Day. Gargett Rodeo Grounds (near public toilets).

Thursday 25, 9.30am-12noon—Habana Pond Apple Field Day Corner of Yakapari- Habana Road and Gardiners Road. RSVP by calling PCL on 4944 1979.

Friday 26, 2.30pm-3.30pm—Hampden Weed Identification Field Day. Hampden State School (on the Bruce Highway).

Saturday 27, 8.30pm-9.30pm—Earth Hour. Turn off lights for an hour to show support for action on climate change.

Supported by:



A Rainbow Lorikeet enjoying Corkwood (*Melicope elleryana*) flowers at the depot earlier this month Image: HK Glover

What's "Freecycle"?

Freecycle is a grassroots, non-profit network of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns, thus keeping useful things out of landfill.

Membership is free and everything posted must be free, legal and appropriate for all ages. To learn more or join the Mackay group, visit <http://www.freecycle.org/group/AU/Queensland/Mackay>



Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News March 2010

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

If unable to be delivered please return to

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare
Group Inc.

PO Box 1076

MACKAY Qld 4740