



## Make a difference in your garden

Gardening is a popular past time. Only 3% of people never garden at all and one in four households visit garden nurseries once a month. However when it comes to gardening, there are certain responsibilities that a gardener must consider. Some garden plants are typically invasive and escape from gardens to invade surrounding bushland and farms.

While invasive garden plants may look beautiful and harmless, be assured they could soon be competing with other plants, including natives. Once these invasive garden plants have 'jumped the fence', they are regarded as weeds, because they continue to spread and choke out native ecosystems. This in turn means that native plants and animals are excluded from their habitats.

Once an invasive species has been planted in gardens in sufficient numbers over a sufficient range, its spread outside is inevitable. Many of these plants have been identified in weed lists, however different regions of Australia often have different weed lists because they may be more of a problem in that area. A major concern with weed lists is that people assume that any plant not on a list is fine to cultivate. This may not be the case.

Invasive garden plants should be replaced with safer alternatives, such as local native plants or species with a low likelihood of spreading.

### How do they spread?

Be aware that your garden clippings and seeding plants could be causing pest plants to spread and do further damage.

Plants spread into remnant bushland and farms in many ways:

- Seeds can be trapped in mud that sticks on vehicles or tyres, tools and equipment.
- Birds and foxes eat fruit and seed and deposit them in nearby bushland.
- Weed seeds can stick or cling to people's clothing and shoes or a pet's fur.
- Bushwalkers and boating enthusiasts can accidentally transport seeds in the camping equipment or boat propellers.
- The wind blows seeds to new locations many kilometres away.
- Residents sometimes illegally dump garden waste over back fences or into bushland and forests spreading these plants to new locations.
- Seeds and other plant parts are washed into waterways where they grow on the banks and spread downstream.

### What can you do?

There are several steps that gardeners can take to help prevent the spread of weeds. Gardeners can make a big difference simply by recognising invasive species and opting not to buy, grow or exchange them, and by never dumping garden waste in the bush.

#### Know what is in your backyard or seek advice

- Identify and learn about the plant species in your garden and know which ones are likely to be weedy and spread quickly. Ask your local council for a list of common invasive garden plants, and then reduce or replace them.
- Your local council or retail garden centre may also have information about safe alternative species.
- Before ordering plant material over the internet or through the mail, check with the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service ([www.aqis.gov.au](http://www.aqis.gov.au)), especially when ordering plants, bulbs, seeds from other countries.
- Many attractive spring-flowering plants grow from corms and bulbs, but when they're in the bush they're exotic weeds, multiplying rapidly by seed or vegetatively. This quality



makes them popular in gardens but enables them to spread rapidly through the bush and crowd out native plants on which native animals depend for food or shelter.

### Dispose of garden waste responsibly

- Never dump garden waste over the back fence or into bushland.
- Compost your garden waste in a compost bin available from a retail garden centre or dispose of other garden waste in bags and then into council green waste collection bins.
- If transporting green waste to a council tip, make sure your load is covered properly so seeds and cuttings don't fall off along the way.

### Seek information

- If you need to know more about native plants, ask your local nursery or retail garden centre as they are usually staffed by experts who will offer very good advice for free.
- If you need to know more about invasive garden plants, ask your local government council or state government.

### Become a Weedbuster

- Visit [www.weedbusters.info](http://www.weedbusters.info) and find out about this weed awareness program
- Register your local activity on the Weedbusters website. See the Weedbusters fact sheet on *Event Ideas*.
- Spread the word about weeds to your local garden club or community.
- Contact your local retail garden centre ([www.ngia.com.au](http://www.ngia.com.au))
- Contact your local government weeds officer or your state/territory government's environment or primary industries department

