

WEEDER'S DIGEST

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF HRCC

Welcome!

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Hawkesbury River County Council's quarterly newsletter, showcasing some of the important work our team has been undertaking.

In this edition, we'll walk you through our recent Open Day, which saw an impressive turnout from the local community, and unpack our unique way of helping to feed the animals at Sydney Zoo. We also sit down with our very own Weed Control Coordinator, Natalie James, to discuss the ins and outs of her role. Our Biosecurity team and Local Landcare Coordinator have been hard at work, so we'll also share some interesting snippets from their work on the ground – from hunting down a fast-growing Kudzu plant to recruiting new Landcare members.

We hope you enjoy this Autumn edition, and we welcome any feedback you might have!



Chris Dewhurst
General Manager

Established in 1948, HRCC is the Local Control Authority for priority and invasive weeds under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015.

In this issue:

- >>> Spotlight on Q2
- >>> HRCC Opens its Depot Doors
- >>> Zoo Animals Wild About Weeds
- >>> Landcare Update
- >>> Biosecurity Bulletin
- >>> Five Minutes with: Natalie James
- >>> Weed Watch: Long-leaf willow primrose
- >>> Weed Wisdom: Alligator weed

Join us on

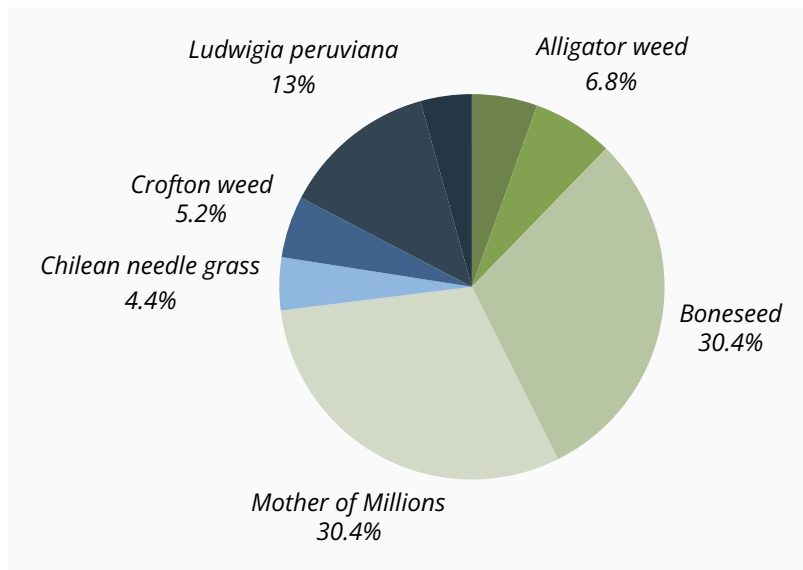


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SPOTLIGHT ON Q2

So far this financial year, HRCC's team has controlled some 30 hectares of weeds, including 22 hectares of terrestrial weeds and seven hectares of aquatic weeds – representing a combined total 871 hours of field work.

We're currently undertaking weed control work on Crown Land under a grant from the Crown Lands Improvement Fund. Along with our new trainees, we've been completing weed mapping and surveillance in areas such as Chain of Ponds Reserve, Skeleton Rocks and Macdonald Valley.



Main priority weed species controlled over FY24/25 to date.

Total terrestrial weeds controlled 2024-25 Financial Year	
Total Hectares Covered	22.2284
Total Hours	576

Total aquatic weeds controlled 2024-25 Financial Year	
Total Hectares Covered	7.04198
Total Hours	295

Our inspections team also conducted 548 kilometres of surveillance in high-risk areas, hitting our surveillance target for the quarter. These areas mainly consist of arterial roads such as the M2 and M7 Motorways, the M4 Motorway, Blacktown Road, Richmond Road and Windsor Road. The high volume of traffic on these roads makes them an easy way for hitchhiking weeds to spread into other LGAs, and our team identified infestations of African Olive, Blackberry and Lantana.

HRCC OPENS ITS DEPOT DOORS

HRCC held a public Open Day in February with funding support from the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development. Over 60 people attended, including three local councillors and the Mayor from Hawkesbury City Council, Clr. Les Sheather. The day involved a presentation on the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015, a weed control demonstration, and displays of different tools and plant samples.

We received unanimously positive feedback on the day, with one visiting Weed Control Officer from another Council stating that HRCC's explanation of the Biosecurity Act was both valuable and accessible. With HRCC preparing to draft a new 10-year organisational plan, we also distributed our community survey.

The Open Day was a great success, and we look forward to holding another one next year. Thank you to everyone who attended!



ZOO ANIMALS WILD ABOUT WEEDS

Fun fact: weeds aren't always a nuisance. For some animals, they form an essential part of their daily diet.

HRCC recently issued a biosecurity permit to Sydney Zoo at Eastern Creek that allows zoo staff to harvest and transport priority weeds to be fed to animals within the zoo. These weeds include Chinese Celtis and African Olive, which is a favourite meal for the dromedary.

As part of this special biosecurity operation, Penrith City Council develops a list of appropriate sites for Sydney Zoo to harvest the approved weeds.



A dromedary enjoying some African Olive.

HRCC conducts an annual inspection to ensure compliance with the biosecurity permit conditions, and this includes a site visit to Sydney Zoo's animal enclosures to ensure the weeds being consumed by the animals haven't started to grow.



Sydney Zoo staff collecting African Olive.

Sydney Zoo can accept plant material provided by local residents under the biosecurity permit. HRCC inspects these landholdings in Penrith and provides information to residents to help them understand the initiative and importantly, how to dispose of plant material after weeds have been controlled.

"This is a game-changer for weed control in our region, and it's great to see priority weeds repurposed in an innovative way at Sydney Zoo. It also shows the success of collaboration and how we can achieve outstanding outcomes working together with our member Councils and the private sector."

Chris Dewhurst, General Manager of HRCC.



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LANDCARE UPDATE



➤➤➤ WILDLIFE PROGRAM GAINS POPULARITY IN OUR REGION

It is fantastic to see the local community getting on board with The Land for Wildlife (LFW) program. LFW is a voluntary property registration scheme for landowners that helps them manage biodiversity and wildlife habitat. The free program encourages and assists landholders to include nature conservation along with other land management objectives.



Neil, a newly-minted LFW assessor.

Landholders who are members of Land for Wildlife can also apply for a Landholder Biodiversity Grant. This provides up to \$2,000 per year to help with costs associated with fencing to secure conservation area or to enable restoration of native vegetation, introduced pest animal control, revegetation, improvements and repairs to existing habitat and other work needed to maintain biodiversity values.

HRCC can help you get involved with the LFW program. If you are interested in chatting with a land manager or in being part of the LFW program, please contact your local Landcare coordinator.

Email your LLC at
[landcare@hrcc.nsw.gov.au!](mailto:landcare@hrcc.nsw.gov.au)

➤➤➤ THIS MAY: CELEBRATE THE ENVIRONMENT IN BILPIN!

WHEN: 10th May 2025, 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM

WHERE: Bilpin Community Farmer's Markets, 2596 Bells Line of Road, Bilpin NSW 2758.

REGISTER: Tickets are free, but booking is required via the QR code.

Every ticket has the chance to win one of 3 eco-raffle prizes.

Come and join the fun at Bilpin Environment Day for a fun-filled family-friendly morning of conservation, education, social networking and community connection.



- Be fascinated by the Blue Mountains Shale Capped Forest (BMSCF) Endangered Ecological Community and discover local plant species, bushland management techniques and skills you can use on your own property. You can also engage with local community groups at their stalls and explore the world of ecological communities and plant resilience with experts.
- Get ready to participate in interactive walks and even meet some native wildlife.
- Check out the display of Bilpin Public School students' beautiful illustrations of flora and fauna created with the guidance of Tom from Hooked on Nature.
- This is a wonderful opportunity to have fun, learn about your local ecosystems and accompanying vegetation, conservation, regeneration, and how you can get involved in community efforts in the region.

BIOSECURITY BULLETIN

Our Biosecurity team has been busy conducting inspections in areas where Boneseed (*Chysanthemoides monilifera subspecies monilifera*) and Chinese Knotweed (*Persicaria chinensis*) have been spotted. The team also followed up on an infestation of Kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*).

Because of its priority weed status, any person who has Boneseed on their property must immediately eradicate the plants and continue to remove any that might regrow – so conducting regular inspections on private land is essential.



Inspecting a drainage channel for aquatic weeds.



A Boneseed plant identified by the team.

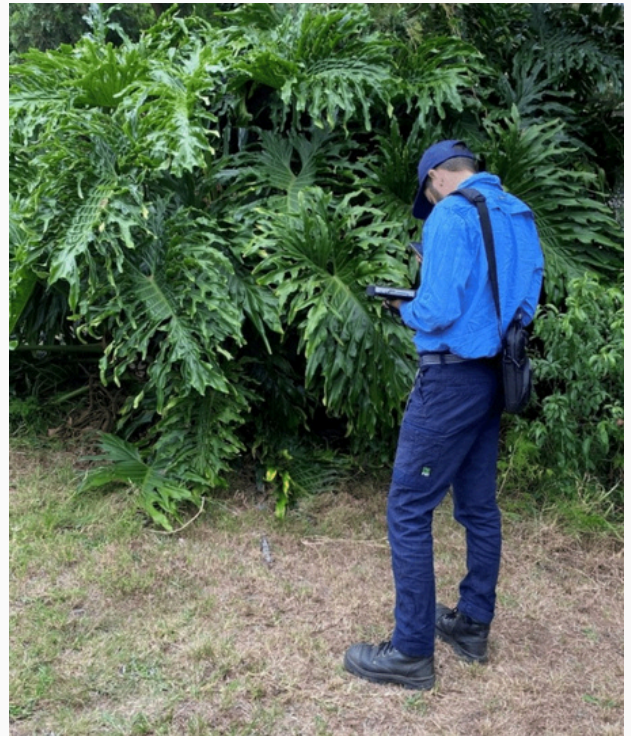
While Chinese Knotweed has only been identified in some locations throughout HRCC's region, it is a regional priority weed targeted for eradication, so we have circled back to make sure all known infestations are under control.



A crop of Chinese knotweed spotted from the bow of our tinny.

A known crop of Kudzu was also spotted near Boundary Creek in the Penrith City Council area.

Kudzu, also known as 'Mile a Minute', is an incredibly invasive vine – and while the plant was thought to be dormant since 2019, our Biosecurity team re-identified and quickly dealt with recurring growth.



One of our inspectors using a tablet to track findings.

FIVE MINUTES WITH: NATALIE JAMES

Natalie James is HRCC's Weed Control Coordinator and a lifelong lover of the environment. We sat down with Nat to discuss how she joined us and share some of her career highlights – as well as her regular battles against the elements.



1. WHAT BROUGHT YOU INTO WEED MANAGEMENT?

My experience growing up in the Hawkesbury, my education, and my volunteer experience have all led me to where I am today. My Dad used to tell me stories about the Yarramundi Salvinia outbreak in 2004, which always fascinated me, so I went on to study Environmental Science and Management at Charles Sturt University. The degree required me to complete six weeks of work experience, so I volunteered with a local bush regeneration group in Albury-Wodonga. I cut down a Privet tree and was instantly hooked – I found the job really satisfying and loved the teamwork aspect of it.

I went on to work as a bush regenerator for five years but took a break to travel the world. In the last few weeks of my trip, I saw the listing for a Trainee Weeds Officer position at HRCC and applied from my hotel room. I kicked off my new role as a trainee shortly after, completed it, became Weed Control Coordinator, and the rest is history.

2. WHAT DOES AN AVERAGE DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

Honestly, there is no average day! I often have a 6:30am start, gather equipment, pack my vehicle and head out to site. I make a weekly roster which outlines different sites and weeds that require treatment, but our work is very weather-dependent, so sometimes things get swapped around depending on the forecast. If the weather is good, we're often responding to requests from our member Councils and treating weeds in different areas. After a day's work, I return to the depot, respond to a few emails, and knock off by 3pm.

3. WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING HRCC'S WEED CONTROL COORDINATOR?

The flexibility - I have both an office job and an outdoors job, and that really works for me. I try to leave at least one day a week which is dedicated to just paperwork.

4. WHAT'S THE MOST CHALLENGING THING ABOUT YOUR ROLE?

I would have to say the weather. It's tricky to predict which days are best to get out in the field. I try to forecast our activity two weeks ahead, but often have to reorganise the schedule as the weather changes.

5. WHAT'S A MEMORABLE MOMENT THAT YOU'VE HAD ON THE JOB?

Helping to organise HRCC's 75-year anniversary Open Day back in 2023. Not only was it our first-ever Open Day, but it was also a great celebration of the HRCC team and the legacy we've built over the years.

6. WHAT'S THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN YOUR ROLE?

Effective communication with residents and community members is key when working in weed management – and having the right skills and knowledge to help solve the weed problems they're facing.

WEED WATCH

»» LONG-LEAF WILLOW PRIMROSE

Ludwigia longifolia, aka 'Long-leaf willow primrose', is an aquatic shrub originally introduced to Australia from South America.



How to spot it

This plant can be found around wet areas and water bodies such as creeks, dams and culverts.

It grows up to three metres tall and has a woody bark and reddish stems which branch into long, thin leaves with a distinctive mid-vein.

It also produces bright yellow flowers in spring and summer, which can aid identification.

However, *Ludwigia longifolia* can be mistaken for *Ludwigia peruviana* - another priority weed - due to its similar yellow flowers. So, double-check when identifying!

How it spreads

Ludwigia longifolia is a prolific seed producer. Over two million seeds can be produced from one plant, and these can be as fine as a speck of dust.

They can travel through waterways after rain, and contaminated machinery (such as lawnmowers) can also spread seeds to new areas.

What to do

If you've spotted *Ludwigia longifolia* (or *Ludwigia peruviana*) on your property, call HRCC.

Avoid mowing it, and make sure all garden machinery is free of plant debris.



Photo by Petra Holland.



FOUND IT? TELL US

(02) 4574 9600

WEED WISDOM

>>> ALLIGATOR WEED

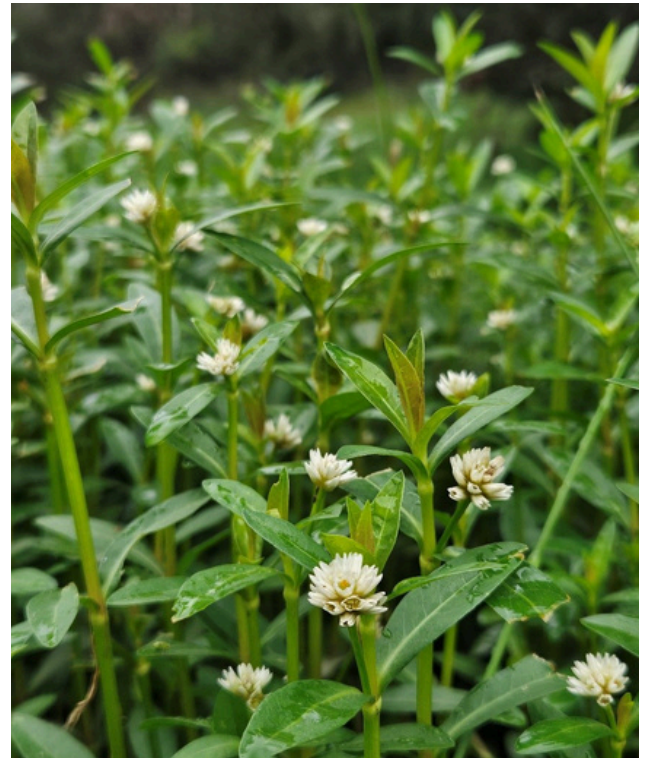
Alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) is a fast-growing invasive aquatic plant which is also native to South America. Growing on the water's surface like a groundcover, it forms dense mats which have the potential to smother native vegetation and clog up the Hawkesbury's creeks.

How to spot it

You'll want to investigate aquatic environments for this weed, especially around the edges of water bodies like creeks and dams. Alligator weed has fleshy opposite leaves and small white flowers connected to hollow stems, which allow the plant to float. It primarily grows in summer and is more noticeable around this time.

How it spreads

A small fragment of Alligator weed can quickly sprout roots, so careful removal is essential. Floods, lawnmowers and soil disturbance all allow Alligator weed fragments to enter new areas, where they can quickly take hold and begin to grow. If you've found this plant on your property, contact HRCC. Avoid mowing around the plant, and make sure you've cleaned any machinery appropriately.



GET IN TOUCH

Call us
02 4574 9600

Email us
inspections@hrcc.nsw.gov.au
council@hrcc.nsw.gov.au

Write to us
PO Box 6021, South Windsor NSW 2756

HRCC operates on the traditional lands of the Darug and Darkinjung peoples.

Be weed wise!
To easily identify weeds,
check the **NSW WeedWise**
directory.

