

Cat's Claw Creeper Update

Adrian Webb (MCCG) Oct 2016

The Weed

Many landholders in the Moggill Creek catchment are already aware of the threats from Cat's Claw Creeper to remnant forests and riparian zones. Their major threat is that they climb to the tree canopy where they slowly smother it, killing the trees. It also completely smothers bushes and smaller native plants and can create a thick carpet that covers the ground surface.

Some landholders have been battling this aggressive exotic vine from South America for several years, and have learned how difficult it is to remove or control. The MCCG committee has been working with the SEQ Catchments, Brisbane City Council and officers of Biosecurity Queensland to bring together information on the ecological threats from this transformer weed; in addition they are collaborating in efforts to support landholders to control its spread particularly in our remnant forests. A comprehensive fact sheet compiled by Kym Johnston of Biosecurity Queensland outlines much of what is known about this vine including methods of control. It is available through the national weeds web site at <http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/catsclawcreeper/>.

Cat's claw creeper is distributed across many areas of remnant vegetation in Moggill Creek Catchment and some infestations are known to have been there for 30 years or more. The most severe infestations are in the moister lower slopes and drainage lines where the denser vegetation occurs.

Although a number of the exotic transformer vines are known to be degrading ecosystems in the Moggill Creek Catchment, specific attention is being given to **cat's claw creeper** because it is not only one of the worst threats, it is also regarded as one of the most difficult to control and eradicate.

How do we respond?

The general strategy being followed is to identify infested sites and then direct control efforts into limiting further spread into important remnant vegetation. Where it is possible, treating the weed across neighbouring properties has some benefits in reducing the level of further infestation in an area. We are particularly aware of this in those areas where infestations are on properties adjacent to or close to major conservation areas such as the Mt Coon-tha Forest and the adjoining D'Aguilar National Park. Because the vine tends not to flower until it gets into tree canopies where there is plenty of sunlight, the first step in any control program needs to be cutting of any vines already on the tree trunks. This reduces the threats of seed production and dispersal by wind or water.

This region includes several identified conservation corridors supported by Brisbane City Council collaborative conservation agreements. Twenty per cent of properties in Moggill Creek Catchment are part of BCC's Wildlife Conservation Partnerships Program including a number of properties that have signed Voluntary Conservation Agreements or Voluntary

Conservation Covenants. By focussing on those parts of the catchment where community engagement is already well advanced, significant environmental benefits can be achieved more efficiently in aspects such as more effective weed management, habitat enhancement and restoration of corridors.

Progress

MCCG has established a good working relationship with SEQ Catchments, BCC, Biosecurity Queensland and latterly with SEQ Water with respect to Gold Creek Water Reserve. Collaboration on selecting the priority infestation areas has resulted in a number of infestations being treated using different funding sources.

- 153 LFWL properties and 20Km of road verge received BCC CCA funding in the last 3 years.
- A further 9 properties received Qld Govt, or Commonwealth funding for vine weed management (principally CCC) in proximity to BCC CCA grants in Upper Brookfield, Upper Wonga Creek sub catchment and Gold Creek sub catchment. One of the sites was supported by a CVA team and MCCG. Tingid bug and Jewel beetle populations have been monitored for the last few years at 9 sites in Moggill Creek Catchment. The populations have survived in most sites and spread quite well in at least 4. Damage to vines has been observed in several sites but there is no obvious reduction in the spread of vines.
- Green Army projects have been approved for weed management in 3 areas over the 2016-17 year. CCC infestations occur in 2 of these areas.

Current aims

- Provide good information on the skills and other resources needed to manage the infestations in the catchment. SEQ Catchments, BCC and Biosecurity Queensland are supporting communication and training activities for landholders seeking information on CCC management practices.
- Share information about new infestations with SEQ Catchments, BCC and landholders to help identify priority areas for assistance. Although we have already quite a bit of information on infestations in the catchment, the MCCG committee wants to make contact with **all** landholders in the catchment who have cat's claw infestations. The better the information we have the better the chance of getting on-ground support to battle this tree destroyer.
- Support landholders in gaining funds for on-ground treatment of Cat's claw creeper.

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