



Inverell Shire Council

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL UNIT

Please address all correspondence to the General Manager, Inverell Shire Council,

144 Otho Street, Inverell, NSW 2360 - Telephone 02 6728 8288 Fax 02 6728 8277

Email council@inverell.nsw.gov.au website www.inverell.nsw.gov.au

Harrisia cactus

Harrisia cactus (*Harrisia martinii*) is a native of the Americas, brought into Australia for its appeal as a garden plant. Harrisia developed into a serious pest in parts of Queensland, eventually spreading into the Boggabilla-Yetman areas of New South Wales. It is causing increasing concern in northern parts of Inverell, Gwydir and Moree Shires. All landholders need be on the lookout for this "new" noxious weed.

Harrisia cactus is spread by seed. A single plant can produce fifty (50) plus fruit per year. Each fruit contains about 800 seeds encased in a sweet, sugary substance attractive to birds, emus, pigs, goannas and ants. Because of this efficient seed production and means of distribution, the plant is certainly capable of spreading quickly.



IDENTIFICATION

Harrisia cactus is a low-growing, jointed, cactus plant. Its runners spread out in all directions (like the tentacles of an octopus), usually taking root again as they touch the ground. The large fruit is bright red when ripe, and splits open to reveal its sweet contents to birds, animals and ants.



THE PROBLEM

Harrisia cactus can form thick infestations, blocking out grazing access and reducing stock-carrying capacity. The sharp thorns are something of a hazard, causing painful injury to animals or humans coming into contact with the plant. The thorns will penetrate work boots, tyres, even chemical spray hoses.

LEGAL STATUS:

Harrisia cactus is a declared NOXIOUS WEED within the Shire of Inverell. Please see legal requirements overleaf.

MORE INFORMATION? PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL WEEDS OFFICER:

Les Tanner 02 6728 8284 - mobile 0427 241 806

Phil Sutton 02 6728 8244 - 0418 446 068

OR check out Council's website on www.inverell.nsw.gov.au, Environmental Services section

HARRISIA CACTUS (CONTINUED)

CC4(B) MANAGEMENT PLAN - LEGAL REQUIREMENTS within the Shire of Inverell - HARRISIA CACTUS

The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled by conducting an on-going and effective treatment program to reduce plant numbers and to minimise the plant's negative impact on the land. All reasonable measures are to be taken to ensure vehicles, machinery and livestock moved off the property are free of the plant. Plant must not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed.

CONTROL METHODS

Ploughing is probably the only means of eradication. Harrisia cactus cannot survive on lands under constant cultivation [NB. State laws apply in respect of land clearing.]

Burning. Tops of plants are easily killed, butts go deep into the ground and therefore require extra heat. Burning is only appropriate for small infestations - with follow-up. Subject to local fire restrictions.



Close-up of harrisia cactus - under attack from mealybug insects Oct 02 (Phil L.J. Tanner)

Biological control using a mealybug (*Hypogeococcus festerianus*) has been effective in some, warmer areas of Queensland and has been used with only limited success in New South Wales. The insects have to be manually transferred into uninfected plants; that means they do not keep up with new infestations being constantly created by seed spread by birds/animals. Nor do the insects prevent plants from producing seed. Strictly speaking, the insects are only appropriate for use in very dense infestations in core areas. The other prickly pear biological agents [cactoblastis](#) and [cochineal](#) are of absolutely no use on Harrisia cactus.

Chemical treatment is effective, but regular treatments are required. According to NSW DPI's excellent booklet "*Noxious and Environmental Weed Control Handbook 3rd Edition*", treatments

registered for use in NSW include:

Chemical	Rate	Comments
Triclopyr 240 g/L + picloram 120 g/L (eg Access®)	1.0 L in 60 L diesel	Folia application, thoroughly wet plants
Metsulfuron methyl 600 g/kg (eg Echem Metsulfuron®)	20 grams in 100 L water plus wetter	Folia application, thoroughly wet plants (some product brands exclude use in NSW)
Dichlorprop 600 g/L (eg Lantana 600®)	1.0 L per 100 L water	Good soil moisture essential and spray at fruiting
Other registrations:		
Triclopyr 300 G/L + picloram 100 g/L etc eg Grazon Extra®	500 mL per 100 L water plus 0.5% Uptake Oil (general rate, all cactus)	Refer to APVMA Permit PER10544. NB: trials indicate best results at half-strength - slower action allows better translocation. LT 12/1/10

IMPORTANT: USE OF PESTICIDES - ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

Pesticides must only be used for the purpose for which they are registered and must not be used in any other situation or in any manner contrary to the directions on the label. Never use herbicide in any way contrary to the label recommendations.

DISCLAIMER: The information contained herein is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Inverell Shire Council or the user's independent adviser. LRT 12/01/10

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