



Inverell Shire Council

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL UNIT

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Tiger Pear

Tiger pear (*Opuntia aurantiaca*) is a native of South America. It's believed to have been introduced into Australia as a garden plant during the very early 1800s.

IDENTIFICATION

Tiger pear is a low-growing, jointed, cactus plant. A typical plant is made up of many joined "segments"; each covered in sharp, 25mm spines. Each spine contains tiny "one-way" barbs - the thorns enter easily but are very difficult to remove! Tiger pear plants average around 60cm high. New plants start from segments, not seeds. The two main growing periods are Feb and Oct when new, bright-green shoots appear. These shoots can grow as long as 10cm in a couple of weeks.

THE PROBLEM

Tiger pear is easily spread. Segments detach from parent plants and attach to passing animals, humans, car tyres etc. Tiger pear will cause painful injury to animals or humans who come into contact with the plant. Dogs, for example, use their teeth to try and remove segments from their paws, and usually end up with thorns stuck in their gums, roof of the mouth, even right through their tongues!



the tiger pear was traced back to a local house garden!)

Other examples of problems caused by tiger pear include lactating cows rejecting their calves because the calves have had a piece of tiger pear stuck on their noses. There are also stories of koalas dying after becoming completely tangled in a thick patch of tiger pear. Although kangaroos and most mature stock learn to "live with" tiger pear, they continue to spread it. And, dislodged tiger pear segments are very hardy - they can lie on top of the ground for months before taking root and establishing as a new plant.

Floodwaters carry tiger pear segments over long distances. Animals then carry the segments back into the hills. Some NSW river systems such as the Turon, Peel, Namoi, Gwydir and Horton valleys have become infested in this way. (And, in most cases the origin of

Unless controlled, tiger pear will seriously impact on a property's grazing potential. Tiger pear impedes stock movement, causes injury to the animals and makes conditions very difficult for the landholder!

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	

TIGER PEAR (CONTINUED)

CC4(C) MANAGEMENT PLAN - LEGAL REQUIREMENTS within the Shire of Inverell

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. Any biological control or other control program directed by the local control authority must be implemented. 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, where possible, is probably the only way to totally eradicate an area of tiger pear. It cannot survive on lands under constant cultivation [NB. ploughing is subject to compliance with Native Veg. Act].

Burning. Tiger pear can be destroyed by fire. Tops of plants are easily killed, butts require extra heat. Take care when collecting plants or stacking wood on top - the small segments are easily scattered. Burning is really only appropriate for small infestations. [NB. subject to local fire restrictions].

Burying tiger pear is another option for small infestations. Plants only have to be buried to the extent that the air supply is cut off. Take care because small segments are easily scattered.

Chemical treatment is recommended for small/isolated infestations, in paddocks used for intensive grazing/horse/cattle studs etc, or where containment is otherwise essential eg river frontages and property boundaries, or in areas where biological control has proven ineffective because of climatic conditions.

According to NSW DPI's excellent booklet "*Noxious and Environmental Weed Control Handbook 3rd Edition*", herbicide treatments include:

Chemical	Rate	Comments
Triclopyr 600 g/L Various trade names eg Garlon 600®	3.0 L per 100 L water OR 1.0 L in 75 L diesel	Apply thoroughly as a foliar spray
Triclopyr + Picloram eg Access®	1.0 L in 60 L diesel	Apply thoroughly as a foliar spray

Remember, it's not hard to kill a single tiger pear plant BUT finding all the small plants and loose segments scattered around the ground is the real challenge! Spraying tiger pear is a job that just cannot be rushed.

Repeated, thorough treatments are necessary.

Biological control is a practical and cost-effective control option for large and/or inaccessible areas of pear, especially in the warmer areas of NSW/QLD. Cactoblastis sometimes attacks tiger pear, but cochineal (photo, right) is more effective in the long term, especially if the landholder gives them some help by simply moving them into new plants. All it takes to do the job is a bucket, a pair of tongs and an hour here and there! For more information on when and how to get the best results from biocontrol insects please refer to:

www.northwestweeds.nsw.gov.au/cochineal.htm

www.northwestweeds.nsw.gov.au/cactoblastis.htm



USE THE RIGHT COCHINEAL.... Tiger, common and rope pear cochineal all appear the same. But, they're not. Only tiger pear cochineal - *Dactylopius austrinus* - works on tiger pear!

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 a 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 07/10/07)

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