

Avoiding escaped garden plants and other weeds

Weeds are plants growing in the wrong place. They are a significant economic and conservation problem and are a major contributor to loss of wildlife habitat and biodiversity. When environmental weeds invade bushland, they threaten native plants, by competing with them for light, nutrients and water. Native plants are often replaced, resulting in the disappearance of animals, birds and insects that depend on them.



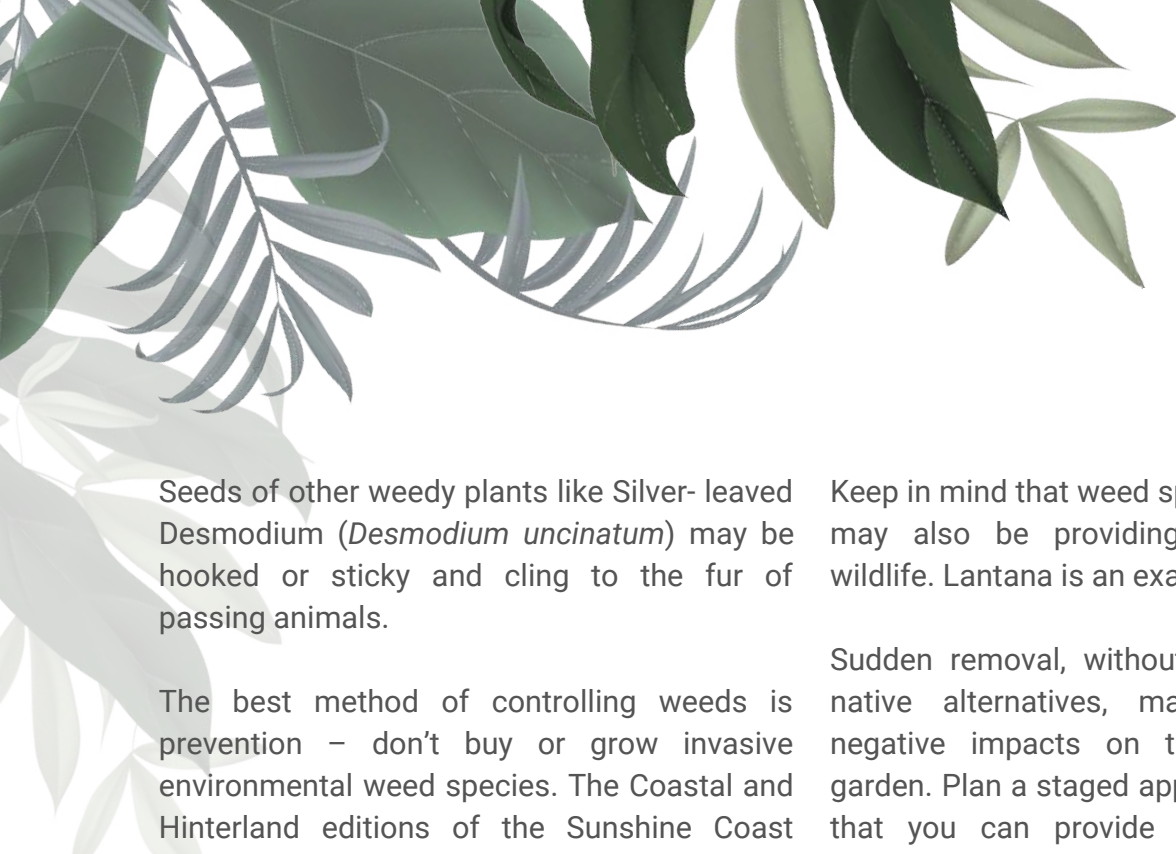
Image: Madeira vine - *Anredera cordifolia*

In addition, some environmental weeds like 'Sheena's Gold' (*Duranta repens*) are poisonous to people and animals.



Weeds can alter the way water moves through the ecosystem, and can increase fire risk. Some plants valuable for culinary or other uses, e.g. Vietnamese Mint (*Persicaria odorata*) are best grown in pots or confined to areas of the garden from which they cannot spread.

Environmental weeds generally come from other parts of the world, but they can also include native plants taken out of their natural range. These can be just as invasive as plants from overseas. Queensland Umbrella Tree (*Schefflera actinophylla*) and Cadagi (*Corymbia torelliana*) from North Queensland are environmental weeds in our area. Some weedy native plants also have the capacity to interbreed, and so change the nature of the local gene pools. About 75% of all plants that have become environmental weeds in Australia, have been deliberately introduced as ornamental or garden plants. Environmental weeds can be spread by wind, water, dumped garden waste, contaminated soil, mud on boots and vehicles. Many weeds, particularly those that produce fruits, can be spread by birds and other animals eating the fruit and then excreting the seeds. Chinese Celtis (*Celtis sinensis*), a serious weed along sections of the Mary River, and Large-leaved Privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*), well known along fencelines and roadsides around Maleny, are two examples.

A decorative graphic of various green leaves, including a large broad leaf and a feathery frond, is positioned in the top left corner of the page.

Seeds of other weedy plants like Silver-leaved Desmodium (*Desmodium uncinatum*) may be hooked or sticky and cling to the fur of passing animals.

The best method of controlling weeds is prevention – don't buy or grow invasive environmental weed species. The Coastal and Hinterland editions of the Sunshine Coast Council free publications "Our Locals are Beauties" both contain weed identification guides and control methods. Most of the beautiful and common exotic garden plants are not weeds, as they have limited or no means of spreading. However, some nurseries and many local market stalls have some invasive species for sale. So buyers beware.

Controlling environmental weeds in the home garden ensures they are not contributing to weed invasion of local bushland. The first thing to do is check that it is a weed and not a native species. Some common environmental weed species include Madeira Vine (*Anredera cordifolia*), Polkadot Plant (*Hypoestes phyllostachya*) and Singapore Daisy (*Spagneticola trilobite*), and will be familiar to many gardeners. Look for local alternatives.

Further information on weed species and control can be found at www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Keep in mind that weed species in your garden may also be providing some habitat for wildlife. Lantana is an example.

Sudden removal, without prior replanting of native alternatives, may have short-term negative impacts on the wildlife in your garden. Plan a staged approach of removal so that you can provide some continuity of wildlife habitat.



Image: Japanese sunflower - *Tithonia diversifolia*