

What does your garden grow? - educating the home gardener

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Summary In the last 200 years more than 28,000 foreign plants have been introduced into Australia. Over 2500 of these plant species are now established in places where they are not wanted and many threaten the integrity of some of Australia's most valued places. Many of these plants are garden escapes.

'What does your garden grow?' is an information resource, developed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management (Weeds CRC), to provide an overview of the impact that weeds have on our unique Australian environment, and show how the general community, through improved knowledge, can contribute to preventing and reducing this impact.

One of the key sections relates to managing weeds in gardens to ensure that our gardens don't have a negative impact on our environment.

This ties in with the Weeds CRC's vision of reducing the risk of new weeds and the impact of existing weeds in Australia. It also ties in with a key method to improve weed training, develop new initiatives to increase weed awareness, and provide skills in weed management, from the wider community to specialist weed managers.

This exciting new initiative, aimed to increase this level of awareness, is an education opportunity that allows partnerships between weed professionals and education providers to empower the community into bringing weeds under control.

The resource includes a Participant's workbook, over 150 quality PowerPoint slides, a series of five 'Managing garden weeds' fact sheets, a Trainer's guide and numerous other resources. These are freely available on CD or via the web (see http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/education_training/index.html).

'What does your garden grow?' is flexible enough to be used as short sessions, as a short course and parts or the whole package support current training programs. It has been developed with examples of weeds from every state.

The PowerPoint slides can then be modified and a 'State resources' folder is included, so that state/region specific photos and information can be added that are more relevant to a climatic zone, particular audience such as gardeners, hobby farmers, or particular environments such as coastal, tropical or arid.

The resource deals with five topics in an interesting and informative way:

- 1) What, why and where of weeds
- 2) When is a plant a weed?
- 3) What does your garden grow?
- 4) How do we take control?
- 5) Why don't you grow me instead?

'Train the trainer' workshops continue to be held across Australia fast-tracking trainers and weed professionals in the adoption of this resource.

Participants made positive comments, such as:

- Resource materials are excellent and can be modified to suit each region.
 - An excellent course explaining the resources available and inspiring us.
 - Great tips on delivery techniques.
- A potential target audience identified includes:
- Community College or TAFE clients.
 - Gardeners, garden clubs or other community organisations.
 - Landcare, Bushcare or other environmental groups.
 - The nursery industry.
 - Other weed professional, such as shire or council weeds officers, national parks.

Keywords Education, community, garden escapes.

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