

CONTROL OPTIONS FOR

CATS CLAW CREEPER

Cats Claw Creeper is a huge problem in the Gympie region. The vine can densely carpet the ground, cover understory vegetation, and prevent recruitment of young native plants. Once the vine smothers standing trees it can transform the entire landscape. Mature vines increase the risk of riverbank erosion during flooding and reduce the economic value of forestry areas. Once the native vegetation has gone the habitat of wildlife is lost.

CONTROL OF CATS CLAW CREEPER IS POSSIBLE ONLY IF EVERY LANDHOLDER CONTRIBUTES.

THREE STEPS IN CATS CLAW CREEPER CONTROL

1 Understand the enemy

Cats Claw Creeper is a long lived perennial vine that carpets the ground and produces an extensive network of underground stolons and tubers. The vine climbs over and covers understorey and canopy trees, and crops up throughout pastures. The vine produces light papery-winged seeds that are spread by wind and water. Seed dispersal is the main way the vine is spread, although vines also spread by growth of the vine along the ground. Thankfully control of seed set is possible as the vines only flower and set seed once runners reach the tree canopy and the seeds are short lived: most seeds are nonviable within 12 months.

2 Decide on a plan of attack

Priority 1: stop seeding. This is done by stopping vines reaching into the tree canopy. Best results come from cutting and immediate application of herbicide to the stump.

Priority 2: eradicate new or isolated infestations. Especially target areas of good native vegetation or economically valuable forests. Best results come from chemical control of young seedlings before tuber networks have become established.

Priority 3: protect important flora and fauna habitat. Identify sites that supports rare species, animal habitat or mature seed trees and keep the vine under control. Best results will come from cutting climbing vines and a mix of biocontrol and chemical agents.

Priority 4: control well established infestations. This can be done progressively through a combination of cutting climbing vines to prevent seeding; control of spreading vines; and use of chemicals or biocontrol agents.



3 Keep at it!

Perseverance to control regrowth is the key to success. If the leafy part of the plant is controlled, and the tubers repeatedly receive herbicide, eventually the tubers will die and regrowth will stop.



Every significant native tree you keep alive by controlling Cats Claw Creeper you should count as a success.

Eradication

It may be possible to eradicate small and isolated Cats Claw Creeper infestations by repeated physical and chemical control, with monitoring 2 or 3 times a year for regrowth followed by retreatment as necessary.

1 Cut all vines climbing up tree trunks or large shrubs to prevent flowering and seed set. Check and re-cut if necessary every 12 months. After 12 months most seeds from the previous flowering will be infertile.

2 The most effective chemical method is cut-stump control of climbing vines (chemicals applied to the stump immediately on cutting) followed by spot spraying of vines at ground level. Read the chemical label carefully before use and always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions.

The initial plants will have grown from wind dispersed seeds. Continued arrival of seeds is likely. Monitor for new plants and eradicate them. Spot spraying seedlings before significant tuber growth is recommended.

Persevere! If the leafy part of the plant is repeatedly controlled, eventually the tubers may die and regrowth stop.



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Contain outbreak & reduce spreading

This is the best option where eradication is impossible because an infestation is well established and extends over a significant area.

1 Set smart goals.

- Start at the top of a catchment and work your way down.
- Start at the edge of an infestation and work toward the centre.
- Stop flowering and seeding by cutting climbing vines.

2 A mix of all control measures will give the best result. Cut vines climbing up trees and apply chemicals to the stump to stop flowering. Apply foliar spray to dense vine on the ground or release biocontrol agents.

3 Check and re treat as necessary every year.

4 Encourage regeneration of native vegetation by clearing and applying chemicals to weeds for at least 1 metre around young regenerating plants. Check and repeat every few months.

Some landholders will not want to use chemicals. This makes control harder but control of flowering by cutting the vines and physically stopping the outward spread of runners along the ground are valuable control methods.

Do not release biocontrol insects where you have recently sprayed or that you will be spraying in the next few months. Consider releasing insects at some locations while spraying others.

Chemical control options

The current Queensland government guidelines for chemical control are listed below.

Ensure vines are actively growing at time of treatment and not under stress of drought, waterlogging or cold. Damaged vines cannot efficiently take up foliar herbicide. Wet leaves thoroughly but avoid run off. Avoid non target species trying to grow under and among the vines.

METHOD	HERBICIDE	RATE
CUT STUMP	360g/L glyphosate	83ml/L water
	500 g/L dicamba	33ml/L water
FOLIAR SPRAY	360 g/L glyphosate	10ml/L water
	500g/L dicamba	4ml/L water
	360 g/L glyphosate + 500g/L dicamba	10 ml g lyphosate /L water 4m dicamba l/Lwater

For foliar spraying use only glyphosate 360 formulations with "frog friendly" wetting agents. Read the label carefully as some "frog friendly" wetters are dangerous to fish and may not be appropriate in some stream side applications.

Physical control options

CUT THE VINES

Cut all vines around a tree trunk at a practical height. If time permits pull vines down to the ground and cut again to leave a bare collar around the tree trunk. This makes it easy to monitor and retreat regrowth.

DIG UP TUBERS

Each Cats Claw runner sets tubers. Each tuber can remain viable for several years. Dig when the ground is moist. In open paddocks a rotary hoe or cultivator may help lift tubers. Destroy tubers by burning, solarisation by baking in sealed plastic bags in the sun, or disposal at a landfill.

Biocontrol options

GRAZING

Allow cattle or goats to graze areas with a dense ground cover of vines. Grazing reduces runners and vines on the ground making it easier to access climbing vines. Heavy grazing damage reduces the vines' suitability for chemical or biocontrol methods.

TINGIDS

Place insect infested plants among healthy, vigorously growing Cats Claw Creeper in well shaded conditions. Intertwine infested runners with targeted plants. Water the plants if necessary for 6 to 8 weeks to maintain vigour.

Gympie Landcare recommends a minimum release of 24 plants per site. Alternatives providing a similar number of insects are 2 boxes of infected cats claw runners or 200 adult insects.

Repeated releases are recommended to establish a comprehensive age structure.

Tingids suck sap from the plant, cause chlorosis (leaves whiten from lack of chlorophyll) and reduce the vine's ability to photosynthesise.

Tingids should not be released among unhealthy Cats Claw Creeper including:

- Vines being grazed;
- Vines affected by drought or seasonal conditions;
- Vines with leaves smothered in dust or silt; or
- Vines being treated chemically.

JEWEL BEETLES

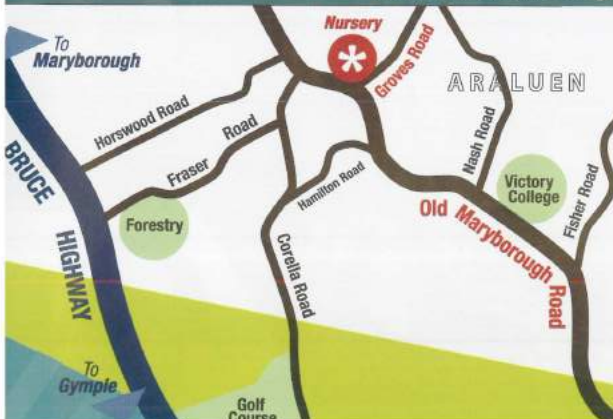
Place 100 adult beetles or pupal discs on healthy vigorously growing Cats Claw Creeper in sunny / dappled light conditions.

Repeated releases are recommended to establish a comprehensive age structure.

Jewel beetle larvae mine the leaf and pupate inside the leaf. Adults eat the leaves.

Jewel beetles shouldn't be released while Cats Claw Creeper is being treated chemically.

For further information go to: <http://goo.gl/D5t85A> or <https://goo.gl/VpSoue>



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Gympie & District Landcare operate a community nursery and biocontrol raising facility. The site is attended Wednesday to Friday and Saturday mornings.



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