

3 PROJECT PLANNING

Project planning is a vital part of any weed control. It helps you to:

- Consider all important issues;
- Be sure about what you hope to achieve (and alert you to what is possible), and;
- Work out how and when you will do what you need to do.

The following chapter can assist you to set achievable goals (3.1); undertake site assessment and consider all relevant background information (3.2); set realistic priorities, timelines and monitor (3.3); develop strategies for your particular situation (3.4), and; prepare a camphor laurel management plan (3.5).

Camphor laurel management plans must be prepared if camphor laurel is declared in your local government area and you do not intend to control them all within the first year.

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3.1 **Setting goals**

It is important to have a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve.

What will happen to the site afterwards? Do you want to re-establish native vegetation? Reclaim pasture? Enhance wildlife corridors? Harvest camphor laurel timber? Setting clear goals is the first step to working out what needs to be done to achieve them.

Within your project you may have both short- and long-term goals. You may need to act now to achieve long-term goals.

3.2 **Site assessment and background information**

No one situation is the same. Assessing each site and obtaining all relevant information before commencing control will enable potential future hazards and opportunities to be seen; saving a lot of time and frustration later. For more information see Joseph (1999), Big Scrub Rainforest Landcare Group (1998) and Buchanan (1996), listed in Chapter 11.

Following is a suggested process for obtaining all relevant information:

3.2.1 **Obtain background information.** Information you may need will include:

Land ownership – Obtain permission if not your land.

Land use – Ensure that your goals do not conflict with the current or future land use. If grazing land consider shade trees and protection of any plantings.

Adjoining land use – Weeds often favour areas receiving nutrient enrichment such as downstream of urban development or dairies. Adjoining wildlife corridors may be enhanced through encouragement and planting of local native species.

Soils – The type and amount of modification of the soil will affect what plants will grow best (including weeds). See chapter 6.2 for more information.

Aspect – Is the land exposed to hot, dry north west winds or cool, moist south east winds.

Maps and aerial photographs provide excellent information. Examples include *Topographic maps* (show elevation, most roads, major creeks: widely available); *Aerial photographs* (show infrastructure, land forms, vegetated areas and corridors: available from Land Information Centre, Bathurst, phone 6332 8200); *Deposited plans* (show property boundaries and their measurements: available from your local Council).

Current and pre-existing vegetation – publications listing / describing current and past native species and their associations occurring in the area may be obtained from NPWS, botanic gardens, Councils or some libraries. Otherwise, look in nearby forest remnants to see what grows best or seek advice from local botanists, bushland regenerators etc.

Location of nearby seed sources – both native and weed seeds. If large forest remnants are found nearby there is a higher chance of birds / animals bringing in native plant seeds.

3.2.2 **Create a site map.** Make it big enough to draw / write key information on it.

3.2.3 **Assess the site.** Note on the map and on separate pages such features as:

- Number of camphor laurel seedlings, saplings and trees in each area;
- Type, age and % cover of other threatening weeds in each area. Are they trees? Vines? Groundcovers? Do they only grow on edges or within the forest? Do they form the canopy (“roof of the forest”)? Are they preventing native plants from regenerating?
- Areas supporting native plants, regeneration, rare plants and significant vegetation communities;
- Bushland linked to other bushland areas (i.e bushland corridors);
- Major topography, especially steep areas and current and potential erosion problem areas;
- Streambanks and watercourses;
- Millable timber, especially where there is good access.

3.2.4 Ask questions. If you do not know, find out! Ask experts from government, community or private organisations such questions as:

What plant is that? Ask Councils, NPWS, NSW Agriculture, botanic gardens, herbariums or private consultants. It may be a serious weed or a rare plant. The best way to have it identified is to take a 20-30cm long sample - include leaves, stems, flowers and fruits if available. Place it temporarily in a moist bag. If keeping it for more than a day, dry it out by lying it flat between sheets of newspaper and placing flat heavy books on top. Change the newspaper after 2-3 days. The sample will take about 10 days to prepare. Information about the plant's growth habit, bark, and where you found it will help identify it. Chapter 12.3 has a sheet to fill out before sending it away.

Is my camphor laurel worth something? Now is the time to find out. See Chapter 7.

How do I reduce the threat of erosion? Ask DLWC staff (see 11.??).

What technique would be best to use here? Ask noxious weeds officers, bushland regenerators, DLWC staff or other experts. See 3.3 for more information.

3.2.5 Other things to do at an early stage

Training - Undertake any training you need before you commence. Possible courses include Farm chemical users, Plant identification, Bush regeneration and Weeds courses.

Get your neighbours involved – Any job is easier with help. If you have camphor laurel on your property, chances are your neighbour will too. Get them involved so that their weeds don't spread back onto your property after you've done all the work. Better still, join a landcare group that is working on camphor laurel control or form a new one. Look outside your boundary and consider your sub-catchment or catchment – you're part of it!

Order / plant replacement species – If planting of shade trees or other plants is required, order them now – they may take up to 6-12 months to be ready, depending on the species.

If re-establishing native vegetation, assess the regeneration potential first. Note the age, number, diversity and health of native plants, distance from native seed sources and the presence of bird perches. What is needed to restore the site to forest? Is natural regeneration enough or is planting required (see Chapter 6.2)? Plant replacement species as soon as possible (usually after other weeds are controlled), ensuring they are not damaged later. Planting alternate food for native fauna can reduce the spread of camphor as the fauna will eat and spread the new plants instead.

3.3 **Priorities, timelines and monitoring**

3.3.1 Set priorities.

Target efforts to where you can achieve the most. Setting priorities can help turn a large insurmountable job into several 'do-able' jobs so you can pat yourself on the back before moving onto the next job! Consider the following before deciding where to start:

Ease – Do easy areas before hard areas in most situations;

Access – You may want to start in more accessible areas first;

Condition – Control isolated weeds, or weeds in good quality vegetation areas first;

Rarity – Protect rare plants / habitats / environments before common ones;

Trajectory – Start in improving areas (regenerating vegetation or pasture) before areas being taken over by weeds.

Priorities will depend on your aims and individual situation so it is important that you set your own priorities (you know your situation the best). Possible priorities could be:

Amongst native vegetation	HIGH PRIORITY
Prime agricultural land	HIGH PRIORITY
Riparian (streambank) areas	STAGED, PRIORITY DEPENDS ON SITUATION
Wildlife corridors	STAGED, PRIORITY DEPENDS ON SITUATION
Urban areas	STAGED, MEDIUM-HIGH PRIORITY
Roadsides	STAGED, MEDIUM-HIGH PRIORITY
Camphor-dominated forests	STAGED, LOW-MEDIUM PRIORITY
Steep slopes	LOW-MEDIUM PRIORITY
Marginal agricultural land	LOW-MEDIUM PRIORITY

3.3.2 Set timelines

Set times for when you hope to complete each important task (i.e targets) so you know whether you're on track or not. Remember to be flexible. Consider the following points:

Control other weeds – Camphors can restrict growth of other weeds (e.g pers. obs., Hungerford, Scott and Bower, pers. comm.). Therefore, where there are other serious weeds such as madeira vine and privet it is often best to control them first, otherwise they will quickly take its place.

Control at the right time – Camphors are much harder to control the second time so it is important to get it right the first time. **Herbicides are most effective when the plant is actively growing** – they are absorbed and circulated more effectively. Two limiting factors to growth are temperature and moisture. Camphor laurel's growth is restricted below 10°C (Specht, 1981a). Camphors are least likely to be water-stressed in summer and autumn when the region generally receives most rain. Glyphosate has also been successful in spring and late autumn, depending on the season (Hungerford, Scott and Bower, pers. comm.), although they may take longer to die in cooler weather (Fox 1997). Tordon DSH[®] has been successful throughout the year (Scott, pers. comm.).

Non-chemical methods of control (see chapter 5.2) have been successfully used by a number of landcare groups throughout the year.

Do not control too many at one time: To effectively control camphor laurel it must be controlled at a rate faster than the rate of spread, however, consider the following points before control:

- Only do as much as you can maintain (it's better to do a little bit "well" than a lot "poorly");
- Control large / heavy infestations gradually, in stages;
- If controlling in stages, do not allow camphor seedlings to mature – control them now;
- Intensive camphor seedling control will be needed until the seedbank in the soil is exhausted. The seed is generally viable for up to 2-3 years (Firth 1979);
- Where there are few camphors, control both seedlings and mature trees in one program.

Work with the seasons: At Rocky Creek Dam near Lismore, large areas of mature camphors, lantana and privets have been controlled in new areas each Spring. This encourages germination of fast growing annual weeds and some native plants. When the annual weeds are then controlled the remaining native seedlings grow with little competition until the next Spring, when they are established enough to be able to compete with many weeds (Woodford, pers. comm.).

- Biodynamic farmers (based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner) believe weed control is most successful if carried out when the moon is in the fourth quarter.

Plant at the right time: Plant replacement species in the wet season – usually summer or autumn – so they have the best start. Be prepared to water them in dry times, especially in the first year.

Be aware of noxious weed declarations: Camphor laurel is declared as noxious in several Shire's (see page 4.1). In these areas, land managers / occupiers have a legal responsibility to control them.

3.3.3 Monitoring

By regularly reviewing your aims, strategies and timelines you can assess whether you are achieving what you set out to do. If you do not meet your targets / timelines, why? Did you underestimate the size of a task? Were there things that you missed during your initial site inspection? Is there a need to change your initial aims, strategies or timelines?

Depending on the size and complexity of the project, you may need to review your work annually or as regularly as weekly. A monitoring sheet has been included in chapter 12.4.

Photographs taken before, during and after control can help you see what you have achieved.

3.4 **Develop strategies for different situations**

There is no single "best" method to control camphor laurel and other weeds; it will depend on your aims, resources and the situation. Photographs and strategies for different environments / situations are listed on the following pages: