

COASTAL WEEDS

By Tim Scanlon, NSW North Coast Weeds advisory Committee

Bitou bush (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera* subsp. *rotundata*) is a major weed problem in the NSW north coast region...but when it's controlled, what replaces it? Unfortunately, in some cases other weeds. Some of these weed species can have just as negative impacts and be at least as hard to control.

As bitou bush is an environmental weed, control needs to focus on reducing its negative impacts. If it is simply replaced by other weeds there may be no real environmental benefit.

The NSW North Coast Weeds Advisory Committee (NCWAC) has produced a Draft Coastal Weeds Strategy – to be used in conjunction with bitou bush management plans. It will help ensure that control and regeneration programs have a holistic approach, consider the whole environment and are coordinated, with involvement of all stakeholders.

The highest priority weeds in the coastal zone vary from area to area. The weeds selected for inclusion in the plan are based on results of the North Coast Weed Risk Assessment and discussions with people in the field. The weed species dealt with in detail in the plan are glory lily (*Gloriosa superba*), asparagus ferns (*Asparagus* spp.), Mickey mouse plant (*Ochna serrulata*), morning glories (*Ipomoea* spp.), umbrella tree (*Schefflera actinophylla*), Senna (*Senna pendular* var. *glabrata* and *Senna septemtrionalis*), turkey rhubarb (*Acetosa sagittata*), Singapore daisy (*Wedelia trilobata*), painted spurge (*Euphorbia cyathophora*) and mossman river grass (*Cenchrus echinatus*).

The Draft strategy recommends focusing efforts to where the most can be achieved, such as high conservation value areas like littoral rainforest, threatened species, grassy headlands and other high priority areas such as pristine areas around popular walking tracks.

To help finalise and implement the strategy the NCWAC has formed the Coastal Weeds Taskforce. The most important part of the Taskforce has been the coming together of all major organizations involved in coastal weed control to agree on a combined approach to the problem. Activities being worked on by the group include:

- Mapping of high conservation value areas (such as those listed in the Draft Bitou Bush Threat Abatement Plan) at 1:50,000 scale.
- Mapping of priority weed species. More ground truthing is to come.
- Best management practices for control and regeneration of priority areas and weeds.
- Local coordinated plans for high priority sites (including more detailed mapping).
- Community education programs and promotion of successful projects.

The next regional weed management plans to be worked on are Riparian weeds, Agricultural weeds and Forest weeds. Your input is vital to ensure that the plans are workable and can be implemented.