

The Mickey Mouse treatment for MICKEY MOUSE PLANTS - by Carl Freeman.

My great quest to find an affective control method for *Ochna serrulata* (Mickey Mouse Plant) began in 2001 while supervising a Green Corps project for EnviTE NSW, this project included weed control and bush regeneration works carried out on site on Woolgoolga Headland.

This regeneration site was knick named the OCHNA FOREST by the project participants due to the density and scale of infestation of this weed, covering approximately one and a half hectares of the Headland Banksia community under story.

Realizing this project too large a task for the team in the time we had allocated to us, it was decided our time would be best spent in carrying out trials to find an affective control technique for *Ochna* as well as setting the site up to be used as a Weeds Education Site to enable the participants to hold open days, inviting interested members of the public along to be educated on the vast number of garden escapes or *Exotic Environmental Weeds* found on the site and coming from the neighboring back yards.

The original control method used on adult *Ochna* was cut / stump and scrape treated with 1/1.5 Roundup, this method was found to result in a number of plants treated re- shooting after approx three months that were much harder to carry out follow up control on due to the thick mass of stems coming from the crown of the surviving plant.

The second technique trialed on adult plants was scrape and paint treated also with 1/1.5 Roundup and proved to be a very effective method if carried out properly, however on a site this large it still proved to be very labor intensive and tedious work.

As adult plants were removed a thick carpet of seedlings emerged that in many cases occupied 100% of the surface area, this could then be sprayed with a 50:1 mix of roundup removing all weed seedlings which could then commence the regeneration process.

Where weed seedlings occupied less than 100% of the surface area it was disappointing to see native endemic plant species being knocked out by this 50:1 mix so a trial plot was set up to test a selective herbicide called Metsulfurom Methyl , Unfortunately although this chemical did not affect the native headland grasses which proved to be the fastest ground cover to re- establish. However it was only effective in defoliating *Ochna* at all stages of growth allowing the weed to kick back to health within three months.

The third control method used on adult *Ochna* was painting bottom one third of plant using 5% Starane R 200 in Diesel- Starane basal bark technique, and this proved to be 100% effective on all plants it was trialed on.

Starane R 200 was then trialed at a rate of 65 ml in 10 liters of water, at this rate *Ochna* adults and seedlings were killed but so also were native grasses, Eventually a rate of 50ml of Starane R 200 in 15 liters of water was found to kill all *Ochna* and not affect native ground covers so was used on seedlings after adults were treated with basal bark technique.

Details and records of all trials can be found in **Headlands Regeneration Manual** prepared for *Coffs Harbour Regional Lancare* and published in 2003.

Ochna serrulata has now become much more manageable and in my current position as Senior Field Officer for NPWS and working on Coffs Coast Regional Park we have been able to make a substantial impact on its population in quite a short amount of time.

There are still quite worrying infestations on private neighboring lands to the Park that will need to be addressed in the near future.

