

CLIENT HANDOUT • NORTH SHORE GARDENS

Weeds to Worry About on the North Shore

23 garden escape artists that sneak into our bushland. How to spot them, why they matter, how to get rid of them safely, and what to plant instead.



Ochna · Photo: Niko Ioannidis, CC BY (iNaturalist)



Ground asparagus · Photo: ttsquid, CC BY (iNaturalist)



Cat's claw creeper · Photo: Greg Tasney, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Why bother? Weeds and our bush

The North Shore backs onto some of Sydney's most precious bush, including Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest. Many of our worst bush weeds started life as garden plants. Birds carry off the berries. Runners, tubers and dumped clippings do the rest.

The good news? A small garden is easy to keep weed-free once you know what to look for. And every weed you swap for a local native gives birds, bees and lizards a new home.

How to use this booklet

- ✓ **Page 2:** your legal duties under the NSW Biosecurity Act, in plain English.
- ✓ **Pages 3–10:** 23 weeds, with photo, ID tips, safe removal, disposal and native swaps.
- ✓ **Page 11:** golden rules for safe weeding, plus more weeds to watch for.
- ✓ **Page 12:** sources, photo credits and how I can help.

🤔 **Not sure what it is?** Don't pull it yet. Some of our best native plants look weedy (see my *Natives Often Mistaken for Weeds* sheet). Snap a photo and ask me.

Five quick wins for this weekend

- ✓ Walk the garden and photograph anything you can't name.
- ✓ Strip berries off privet, ochna, cotoneaster and asparagus fern before birds do.
- ✓ Cut (don't pull) vines climbing into trees.
- ✓ Check fence lines and under bird perches for seedlings: they're easiest to pull now.
- ✓ Bag seeds and tubers; never dump clippings over the back fence.

Sources: NSW WeedWise; NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee determinations (BGHF, STIF); RF Horticulture weeds list. Full list p.12.

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Weeds and the law, in plain English

In NSW, dealing with weeds isn't just good manners. Under the **Biosecurity Act 2015** it's part of looking after your land. Here's what that means for an ordinary home garden.

1. Everyone has a "general biosecurity duty"

If you own, rent or manage land, or deal with plants, and you know (or ought reasonably to know) a plant is a weed risk, you must **prevent, eliminate or minimise** that risk **so far as is reasonably practicable**.

In plain words: know what's growing in your garden, don't let weeds spread over the fence or into bushland, don't plant or share known weeds, and get rid of them properly. It's about reasonable effort, not perfection. Phew.

2. Some weeds must not be sold or given away

Several common garden plants are **State priority weeds** that must not be sold, swapped ("bartered or exchanged") or offered for sale anywhere in NSW. On the North Shore that includes:

STATE PRIORITY lantana · ground asparagus · climbing asparagus fern · bridal creeper · Madeira vine · cat's claw creeper · blackberry (except listed varieties)

So: no cuttings for the neighbours, no plant-stall pots, and no "free to good home" on Marketplace.

3. Extra rules for Greater Sydney priority weeds

The Greater Sydney regional weed plan adds recommended measures for certain weeds. For example:

- **REGIONAL** **Singapore daisy, cat's claw creeper, African olive, pampas grass:** don't buy, sell, move, carry or release them, and stop them spreading from your land.
- **REGIONAL** **Climbing asparagus (*Asparagus africanus*) and Ming asparagus fern:** the aim is eradication. If you find them, tell your council.

4. Councils check and enforce

Your council is the local control authority for weeds. Its authorised officers can inspect properties and can direct owners to control priority weeds.

Found something unusual?

Some plants are **prohibited matter** (for example, bridal veil creeper). If you suspect one, don't move or treat it: report it to the NSW DPI Biosecurity Helpline, **1800 680 244**, or contact your council's weeds officer.

MYTH: "It's only a problem if the council tells me to remove it."

FACT: The general biosecurity duty applies to every weed risk you know about (or reasonably should), not just listed weeds. Councils can also inspect and direct owners to control priority weeds.

What this sheet's labels mean

STATE PRIORITY · MUST NOT BE SOLD statewide ban on sale/exchange, plus the general duty. **REGIONAL PRIORITY · GREATER SYDNEY** regional measures apply. **ENVIRONMENTAL WEED · GENERAL DUTY** not a listed priority weed, but the general duty still applies. **TREE-SIZED** council tree rules may apply even to weeds, so check before removing.



Trees & shrubs



Broad-leaf privet · Photo: tobyyy, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)



Narrow-leaf privet · Photo: O. Neate, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Privet (broad-leaf & narrow-leaf) *Ligustrum lucidum*, *L. sinense*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED · GENERAL DUTY

TREE-SIZED? CHECK COUNCIL TREE RULES

POISONOUS

SPOT IT**Broad-leaf:** tree 4–10 m; glossy, dark green leaves 4–13 cm in opposite pairs; sickly-sweet cream flowers; bunches of berries ripening blue-black.**Narrow-leaf:** dense shrub to about 3 m; dull, wavy-edged leaves 2–5 cm, finely hairy underneath; very fragrant white flowers, mostly spring.**WHY IT MATTERS**

Birds spread the berries into bushland, where privet outcompetes native plants. The fruit is poisonous to people, and the plant can cause skin irritation and breathing problems.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Pull or dig seedlings after rain, getting the roots. Larger plants: cut-and-paint or stem injection with a registered herbicide. Cut off fruiting branches first.

DISPOSAL

Leaves and branches: green bin. Berries: bag them for the red bin.

Plant instead: Grey myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*), Lilly pilly (*Acmena smithii*), Muttonwood (*Myrsine variabilis*), Blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*)

Photo: Lachlan Copeland, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Camphor laurel *Cinnamomum camphora*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED · GENERAL DUTY

TREE-SIZED? CHECK COUNCIL TREE RULES

SPOT IT

Evergreen tree to 20 m with a broad canopy and rough grey-brown bark. Glossy leaves 5–10 cm; crushed leaves smell strongly of camphor. Tiny white flowers; round 8 mm berries ripen black.

WHY IT MATTERS

Birds eat the berries and drop seed under perches, along fences and in bushland. Camphor can form single-species stands that stop native seedlings regenerating.

REMOVE IT SAFELYSeedlings pull out easily. Saplings: dig out, or cut-and-paint. Established trees need an arborist and a check of your council's tree rules first (see my *Before You Remove a Tree* sheet).**DISPOSAL**

Leaves and branches: green bin. Bag any berries.

Plant instead: Blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*), NSW Christmas bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*), Cheese tree (*Glochidion ferdinandi*), Lilly pilly (*Acmena smithii*)

Photo: Harry Rose (CC0, iNaturalist)

African olive *Olea europaea* subsp. *cuspidata*

REGIONAL PRIORITY · GREATER SYDNEY

TREE-SIZED? CHECK COUNCIL TREE RULES

SPOT IT

Dense shrub or small tree 5–10 m. Leaves 6–10 cm in opposite pairs, glossy grey-green above, yellow-brown or green below, often with a hooked tip. Small creamy flowers in spring–summer; small olives ripen purple-black.

WHY IT MATTERS

Forms dense shade that suppresses native understorey plants. In Greater Sydney you should stop it spreading from your land, and it should not be bought, sold, moved or released.

REMOVE IT SAFELYPull or dig out seedlings with all the roots. Larger plants: cut-and-paint or stem injection with a registered herbicide. Don't confuse with the native mock olives (*Notelaea*), which have bigger, leathery leaves.**DISPOSAL**

Bag fruit for the red bin; branches in the green bin.

Plant instead: Muttonwood (*Myrsine variabilis*), Grey myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*), Large-leaf hop-bush (*Dodonaea triquetra*), Blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*)



Trees & shrubs (continued)



Photo: Niko Ioannidis, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Ochna ("Mickey Mouse plant") *Ochna serrulata*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY**SPOT IT**

Shrub 2–3 m. Narrow glossy leaves 2–10 cm with finely toothed, wavy edges; bronze new growth. Yellow spring flowers, then black berries sitting on bright red sepals, like a Mickey Mouse face (Sept–March).

WHY IT MATTERS

Very hardy; birds spread the seed and it can form dense thickets that crowd out natives. Its deep, kinked taproot makes it hard to remove.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Don't pull it: it snaps at the kink in the root and regrows. Dig out small plants (under 20 cm) in soft soil. Larger plants: cut-and-paint with a registered herbicide. Pick off fruit before it ripens.

DISPOSAL

Bag fruit for the red bin; stems in the green bin.

Plant instead: Coffee bush (*Breynia oblongifolia*), Rough-fruited pittosporum (*Pittosporum revolutum*), Prickly beard-heath (*Leucopogon juniperinus*), Native indigo (*Indigofera australis*)

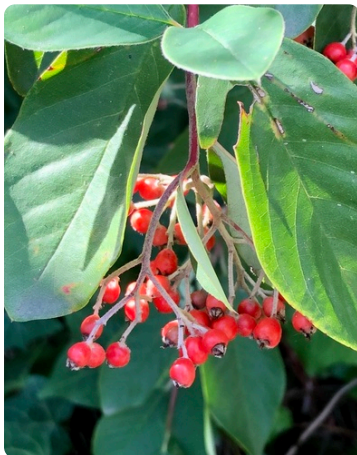


Photo: James K. Douch, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster glaucophyllus* and others

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY**POISONOUS****SPOT IT**

Arching evergreen shrub to about 3 m. Leaves 2–8 cm, dark green above, grey-green with white hairs below. Clusters of small white flowers; masses of red berries (7–8 mm) in autumn and winter.

WHY IT MATTERS

Escapes from gardens into bushland, forming dense thickets that shade out local plants. Poisonous to people, dogs and livestock.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Hand-pull or dig out seedlings any time of year. Larger shrubs: cut-and-paint with a registered herbicide. Cut off berry clusters first.

DISPOSAL

Bag berries for the red bin; prunings in the green bin.

Plant instead: Blue flax-lily (*Dianella caerulea*), NSW Christmas bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*), Blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*), Coffee bush (*Breynia oblongifolia*)



Photo: Matt B, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Lantana *Lantana camara*

STATE PRIORITY • MUST NOT BE SOLD**POISONOUS****SPOT IT**

Prickly shrub 2–4 m, or a scrambler climbing up to 15 m into trees. Rough, toothed leaves in opposite pairs that smell when crushed; square, prickly young stems; flower heads in pink, red, orange, yellow or white; shiny purple-black berries.

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers native plants and bushland, adds fuel for bushfires, and is poisonous to animals and people. It must not be sold, swapped or given away anywhere in NSW.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

After rain, grub out the shallow roots with a mattock (wear gloves). Big clumps: cut, then treat stumps or regrowth with a registered herbicide. Follow up in 3–6 months. Remove in stages and replant, as small birds shelter in it.

DISPOSAL

Stems without fruit: green bin. Fruiting stems: bag for the red bin.

Plant instead: Sweet bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*), Prickly Moses (*Acacia ulicifolia*), Native indigo (*Indigofera australis*), Large-leaf hop-bush (*Dodonaea triquetra*)



Trees & shrubs (continued)



Photo: Thomas Mesaglio, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Cassia *Senna pendula* var. *glabrata*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

SPOT IT

Sprawling shrub 2–4 m. Leaves made of 3–6 pairs of rounded leaflets. Bright yellow, pea-like flowers about 3 cm across, mostly late summer–autumn, then hanging pods 10–20 cm long.

WHY IT MATTERS

Fast-growing; invades bushland (especially near the coast), outcompetes native plants and reduces food and habitat for wildlife.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Pull or dig out small plants when the soil is damp, including the roots so they don't reshoot. Larger shrubs: cut-and-paint. Act before it flowers and sets seed, then pull new seedlings as they pop up.

DISPOSAL

Bag seed pods for the red bin; other prunings in the green bin.

Plant instead: Sunshine wattle (*Acacia terminalis*), Hairy bush-pea (*Pultenaea villosa*), Eggs and bacon (*Dillwynia retorta*), Golden guinea flower (*Hibbertia scandens*)



Photo: Isaiah Findley (CC0, iNaturalist)

Umbrella tree *Schefflera actinophylla*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY**TREE-SIZED? CHECK COUNCIL TREE RULES**

SPOT IT

Often multi-trunked tree to 10 m. Large glossy leaves of 7–16 leaflets radiating like an umbrella. Long spikes of red flowers at the top of the tree in autumn; small dark red-purple fruit.

WHY IT MATTERS

Native to North Queensland but a weed here: birds spread it into bushland, it outcompetes local plants, and its roots can block pipes and damage structures.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Pull very small seedlings in moist soil; dig out small trees. Larger trees: professional removal. Because it is an Australian native, check council and native-vegetation rules first.

DISPOSAL

Green bin for leaves; bag fruiting heads.

Plant instead: Lilly pilly (*Acmena smithii*), Cheese tree (*Glochidion ferdinandi*), Grey myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*), Blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*)



Photo: Thomas Mesaglio, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Crofton weed *Ageratina adenophora*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY**POISONOUS**

SPOT IT

Upright, multi-stemmed shrub 1–2 m. Soft, hairy, reddish-purple young stems; diamond-shaped toothed leaves 4–12 cm in opposite pairs; fluffy white flower clusters in spring; thick yellowish root that smells like carrot.

WHY IT MATTERS

Spreads quickly from huge numbers of fluffy, wind-blown seeds, outcompetes native plants in damp spots and gullies, and is poisonous to horses.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Pull or dig out scattered plants, removing the whole crown, ideally before flowering. Check again each spring for seedlings.

DISPOSAL

Flowering or seeding plants: bag for the red bin. Otherwise green bin.

Plant instead: Spiny-headed mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*), Sedge (*Carex maculata*), Sandfly zieria (*Zieria smithii*), Gristle fern (*Blechnum cartilagineum*)



Trees & shrubs (continued)



Photo: smathichong, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus aggregate*

STATE PRIORITY · MUST NOT BE SOLD**SPOT IT**

Tangled, arching prickly stems. Leaves of 3–5 toothed leaflets with curved prickles on the veins underneath. White or pink flowers 2–3 cm in spring–summer; berries ripen from red to shiny black.

WHY IT MATTERS

Forms dense, prickly thickets that crowd out native plants. Blackberry (apart from listed thornless varieties) must not be sold anywhere in NSW.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Dig out small plants after rain, taking roots to at least 45 cm deep, as plants regrow from roots. Large thickets are a job for a professional. Don't confuse with native raspberry (see my lookalikes sheet).

DISPOSAL

Bag fruit and crowns for the red bin. Cut canes: green bin.

Plant instead: Native raspberry (*Rubus parvifolius*), Sweet bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*), Needlebush (*Hakea sericea*), Prickly beard-heath (*Leucopogon juniperinus*)

Vines & climbers



Photo: Will Cornwell, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Madeira vine *Anredera cordifolia*

STATE PRIORITY · MUST NOT BE SOLD**SPOT IT**

Twining vine with bright green, fleshy, heart-shaped leaves (2–15 cm) and knobbly **aerial tubers** along the stems. Drooping spikes of fragrant cream flowers in late summer–autumn; large underground tubers.

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers and kills plants up to tall trees; the weight of vines and tubers brings down branches. Every tuber can grow a new plant.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Don't pull it down from trees: tubers shower everywhere. Cut stems near the ground and lay a tarp to catch falling tubers; dig out underground tubers. Scrape-and-paint with a registered herbicide. Cut vines can keep dropping tubers for up to two years.

DISPOSAL

Never compost or green-bin. Bag all tubers, stems and leaves for the red bin.

Plant instead: Wonga wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*), Sweet sarsaparilla (*Smilax glyciphylla*), Purple coral pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Headache vine (*Clematis glycinoides*)



Purple · Photo: insiderelic (CC0, iNaturalist)



Coastal · Photo: Colin Meurk, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Morning glory (purple & coastal) *Ipomoea indica, I. cairica*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED · GENERAL DUTY**POISONOUS****SPOT IT**

Purple: heart-shaped or 3-lobed hairy leaves; blue-purple trumpet flowers 6–8 cm that fade to pink by afternoon. **Coastal:** leaves cut into 5–7 finger-like lobes; violet or pink flowers with a darker throat.

WHY IT MATTERS

Fast vines that blanket shrubs and climb into tree canopies (purple morning glory up to 15 m). Purple morning glory is poisonous to people.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Cut climbing stems and leave the tops to wither, making sure cut stems don't touch the soil. Dig out the crown and roots carefully; pieces left behind regrow.

DISPOSAL

Bag roots and stem pieces (they can re-root) for the red bin.

Plant instead: Purple coral pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Dusky coral pea (*Kennedia rubicunda*), Wonga wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*), Hairy apple berry (*Billardiera scandens*)

Vines & climbers (continued)



Photo: Thomas Mesaglio, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Balloon vine *Cardiospermum grandiflorum*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

SPOT IT

Climbing vine to 10 m with tendrils. Leaves divided into 3 groups of 3 toothed leaflets; hairy young stems. Small white 4-petalled flowers; papery, ribbed balloon-like pods 4–8 cm, green turning straw-coloured.

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers other plants; even tall trees can collapse under its weight. Reduces food and shelter for native animals.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Cut vines growing over other plants and leave the top part to die. Pull or dig out all of the roots, as fragments regrow. Pick pods before they dry and split.

DISPOSAL

Bag pods and roots for the red bin.

Plant instead: Old man's beard (*Clematis aristata*), Wonga wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*), Golden guinea flower (*Hibbertia scandens*), Hairy apple berry (*Billardiera scandens*)



Photo: Greg Tasney, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Cat's claw creeper *Dolichandra unguis-cati*

STATE PRIORITY • MUST NOT BE SOLD

REGIONAL PRIORITY • GREATER SYDNEY

SPOT IT

Woody vine climbing up to 30 m or carpeting the ground. Leaves in pairs of 2 leaflets with a 3-pronged, claw-like tendril between them. Bright yellow trumpet flowers 4–8 cm in spring; flat winged seeds; masses of underground tubers.

WHY IT MATTERS

Kills trees and shrubs and can bring down whole trees. Listed in NSW as a key threatening process. Must not be sold; in Greater Sydney don't move it or let it spread from your land.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Cut all stems near the ground, leaving a gap so the top dies. Don't pull vines out of the canopy. Dig tubers out of small plants; treat regrowth with a registered herbicide. Keep checking for at least 5 years.

DISPOSAL

Tubers must leave the site: bag for the red bin. Never compost.

Plant instead: Golden guinea flower (*Hibbertia scandens*), Wonga wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*), Hairy apple berry (*Billardiera scandens*), Purple coral pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*)



Photo: Caleb Catto, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Moth vine *Araujia sericifera*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

POISONOUS

SPOT IT

Twining vine 6–10 m with **milky sap**. Dull, leathery, triangular leaves 3–11 cm, whitish underneath, in opposite pairs. Creamy-white to pink tubular flowers Nov–March; large pear-shaped pods like a choko (6–10 cm).

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers native plants and is poisonous to people and animals. Each pod can hold up to 400 silky seeds that blow away and stay viable for up to 5 years.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Wear gloves and keep the sap off skin and out of eyes. Pull seedlings; dig roots out at least 10 cm deep. Cut big vines and leave them to wither. Remove pods before they split.

DISPOSAL

Bag pods for the red bin. Native milk vines look similar (see my lookalikes sheet).

Plant instead: Headache vine (*Clematis glycinoides*), Purple coral pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Sweet sarsaparilla (*Smilax glycyphylla*), Old man's beard (*Clematis aristata*)

Vines & climbers (continued)



Photo: Caleb Catto, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Japanese honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

SPOT IT

Woody twiner climbing to 10 m or forming ground mats. Oval leaves 3–8 cm in opposite pairs; hairy, reddish young stems. Paired, fragrant, two-lipped white flowers that age to yellow (Jan–July); shiny black berries.

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers and outcompetes native plants (mats can be over 1 m thick) and stops native seedlings regenerating.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Hand-pull small seedlings; dig out larger plants to remove the crown and roots. Cut climbing stems and leave them to die. Don't mow or slash plants with fruit.

DISPOSAL

Bag berries and rooted stems for the red bin.

Plant instead: Old man's beard (*Clematis aristata*), Wonga wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*), Purple coral pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Hairy apple berry (*Billardiera scandens*)



Photo: Carl Ramirez, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Bridal creeper *Asparagus asparagoides*

STATE PRIORITY • MUST NOT BE SOLD

SPOT IT

Wiry, twining stems to 3 m with shiny, oval "leaves" (really flattened stems; wider than other asparagus weeds). Scented greenish-white flowers in late winter–early spring; red berries. Grows in autumn–winter and dies back in summer; thick mat of tubers below.

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers and outcompetes native plants. Must not be sold anywhere in NSW. The native scrambling lily looks similar but has a prominent midvein and black fruit.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Dig out all rhizomes and tubers, easiest in winter while it is growing. Collect all fruit, including green fruit, which can still ripen after cutting.

DISPOSAL

Bag everything; leaving bags in the sun 2–3 months kills the rhizomes (some seed may survive). Then red bin.

Plant instead: Wombat berry (*Eustrephus latifolius*), Sweet sarsaparilla (*Smilax glyciphylla*), Headache vine (*Clematis glycinoides*), Hairy apple berry (*Billardiera scandens*)

Groundcovers, grasses & ferns



Ground asparagus · Photo: ttsquid, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Asparagus "ferns" (ground asparagus & climbing asparagus fern)

Asparagus aethiopicus, *A. plumosus*

STATE PRIORITY • MUST NOT BE SOLD

SPOT IT

Not true ferns. **Ground asparagus:** arching, spiny stems 1–2 m from a central crown; small white-pink flowers; glossy red berries; watery white tubers. **Climbing asparagus fern:** fine, feathery sprays held flat, wiry climbing stems to about 5 m; black berries.

WHY IT MATTERS

Form dense mats and thickets that smother native plants; birds spread the berries. Both must not be sold, swapped or given away in NSW.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

"Crowning": cut back the stems, then use a sharp knife or trowel to cut the roots around the crown just below the surface and lever the whole crown out. Any piece left behind regrows.

DISPOSAL

Bag crowns and all fruit (even green) for the red bin.

Plant instead: Common maidenhair (*Adiantum aethiopicum*), Prickly rasp fern (*Doodia aspera*), Gristle fern (*Blechnum cartilagineum*), Spiny-headed mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*)



Climbing asparagus fern · Photo: insiderelic (CC0, iNaturalist)

Sources: NSW WeedWise species profiles & biosecurity duties (weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au); PlantNET (NSW Flora Online); RF Horticulture weeds & native-plants lists. Fishbone fern & panic veldtgrass control: general bush-regeneration practice. Full source list on page 12.

Groundcovers, grasses & ferns (continued)



Photo: Harry Rose (CC0, iNaturalist)

Trad (wandering trad) *Tradescantia fluminensis*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

SPOT IT

Slightly succulent groundcover forming dense mats in shade. Shiny, dark green leaves 2.5–5.5 cm wrapped around the stem by a sheath; stems swollen at the joints, rooting as they go; small **white** 3-petalled flowers.

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers the ground layer and regrows from tiny fragments. It can cause severe allergic skin reactions in animals (dogs especially) and occasionally people.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Pull or rake and roll into bundles, getting every piece. In warm weather, covering patches with plastic for 2–6 weeks helps. Check monthly for regrowth. Keep the native scurvy weed (blue flowers).

DISPOSAL

Bag all fragments for the red bin. Never green-bin or compost.

Plant instead: Scurvy weed (*Commelina cyanea*), Native violet (*Viola hederacea*), Whiteroot (*Lobelia purpurascens*), Pastel flower (*Pseuderanthemum variabile*)



Photo: Martin Hannan-Jones, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Singapore daisy *Sphagneticola trilobata*

REGIONAL PRIORITY • GREATER SYDNEY

SPOT IT

Creeping, mat-forming groundcover. Glossy, fleshy leaves 3–11 cm, usually with 3 pointed lobes and toothed edges, in opposite pairs; stems root at the joints. Yellow-orange daisies up to 3 cm, mostly spring–autumn.

WHY IT MATTERS

Smothers low plants and spreads from tiny pieces. In Greater Sydney you should not buy, sell, move or release it, and should stop it spreading from your land.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Hand-pull or dig out as much as possible; repeat, as new plants grow from small pieces and seed. A registered herbicide may be needed for follow-up.

DISPOSAL

Bag everything for the red bin.

Plant instead: Golden guinea flower (*Hibbertia scandens*), Ivy goodenia (*Goodenia hederacea*), Native violet (*Viola hederacea*), Kidney weed (*Dichondra repens*)



Photo: James K. Douch, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Mother-of-millions *Bryophyllum delagoense* and hybrids

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

POISONOUS

SPOT IT

Succulent 30 cm–1 m with pinkish-brown or grey stems and pencil-shaped, greyish leaves with dark blotches. Tiny plantlets form at the leaf tips and drop off to make new plants. Orange-red bell flowers, May–October.

WHY IT MATTERS

Poisonous to people and pets (dogs are particularly susceptible) and livestock; the flowers are the most toxic part. Spreads rapidly from plantlets and long-lived seed.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Wear gloves. Hand-pull plants and collect every plantlet from the soil surface. Check again regularly.

DISPOSAL

Seal in black plastic bags until fully rotted, then red bin. Never compost or green-bin.

Plant instead: Blue flax-lily (*Dianella caerulea*), Spiny-headed mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*), Silky purple-flag (*Patersonia sericea*), Button everlasting (*Coronidium scorpioides*)

Groundcovers, grasses & ferns (continued)



Photo: Alesha Teitzel, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Fishbone fern *Nephrolepis cordifolia*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

SPOT IT

Upright, sword-like fronds 30–90 cm with many small, evenly spaced leaflets (the "fishbone"). Spreads by wiry runners and forms small round tubers on the roots; dense colonies under trees and on rock walls.

WHY IT MATTERS

Spreads into dense patches that crowd out native ground plants. In NSW it is native only in the far north; in Sydney it is a garden escape (see my lookalikes sheet).

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Dig out clumps including all runners and tubers (tubers resprout). Repeat follow-up. Large infestations may need a registered herbicide.

DISPOSAL

Bag tubers and runners for the red bin. Don't compost or dump.

Plant instead: Prickly rasp fern (*Doodia aspera*), Gristle fern (*Blechnum cartilagineum*), Common maidenhair (*Adiantum aethiopicum*), Rainbow fern (*Calochlaena dubia*)



Photo: Jon Sullivan, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Panic veldtgrass *Ehrharta erecta*

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED • GENERAL DUTY

SPOT IT

Tufted, soft, bright green grass to about 60 cm with broad, flat, floppy leaves and an **upright, open seed head**. Seeds almost year round in moist shade; very common in North Shore garden beds and bush edges.

WHY IT MATTERS

Seeds prolifically and invades shady gardens and bushland edges. It is listed among the weeds threatening Blue Gum High Forest.

REMOVE IT SAFELY

Hand-pull or chip out before it seeds (easy when the soil is moist); remove seed heads first. Pull new seedlings as they appear, and repeat over several seasons.

DISPOSAL

Seeding plants: bag for the red bin. Without seed: green bin.

Plant instead: Weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), Creeping beard grass (*Opismenus imbecillis*), Tussock grass (*Poa affinis*), Sedge (*Carex maculata*)

Plant instead: the quick swap list

Most weeds on these pages were planted for a reason: a quick screen, a pretty climber, a tough groundcover. Here's a local native that does the same job:

If you wanted...	Instead of...	Try...
A fast hedge or screen	privet, cotoneaster	grey myrtle, lilly pilly, muttonwood
A small shade tree	camphor laurel, umbrella tree	blueberry ash, NSW Christmas bush, cheese tree
A flowering climber	morning glory, jasmine, honeysuckle	wonga wonga vine, hardenbergia, old man's beard
Yellow flowers	cassia, Singapore daisy	sunshine wattle, golden guinea flower
A shady groundcover	trad, fishbone fern	scurvy weed, native violet, prickly rasp fern
Cover for small birds	lantana, blackberry	sweet bursaria, needlebush, prickly Moses



Golden rules for safe weeding

- 1 Be sure of the ID.** If in doubt, leave it and ask. Natives such as scurvy weed, weeping grass and native raspberry are often pulled by mistake.
- 2 Weed after rain.** Roots come out whole from moist soil, so there's less regrowth.
- 3 Seeds and tubers first.** Remove berries, pods and seed heads before you disturb the plant.
- 4 Work from the good bits outwards.** Start where natives are strongest and work toward the worst weeds, so natives can fill the gaps.
- 5 Go in stages.** Small birds such as wrens hide in weedy thickets. Replace cover as you remove it, and don't strip big areas bare (slopes can wash away).
- 6 Never dump garden waste in bushland** or over the back fence. It's one of the main ways weeds escape.
- 7 Herbicides:** only use a product registered for that weed and situation, exactly as the label (or an APVMA permit) says. Keep it away from drains and waterways. Anyone using herbicide as a paid service needs training and licensing.
- 8 Gloves on** for prickly, sappy or poisonous plants, and wash up afterwards.
- 9 Follow up.** Check again in 4–6 weeks, then each season. Weeds rarely give up after one round.

What's "cut-and-paint"? You'll see it a lot in this booklet. Cut the stem off low, then straight away paint the fresh cut with a herbicide registered for that weed, following the label. The plant drinks it down to the roots. It uses far less chemical than spraying.

Which bin?

Green (garden) bin: leaves, stems and prunings of most weeds with no seed, fruit or tubers. Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai list weeds as OK in the green bin.

Bagged, in the red bin: berries, seed heads, pods, tubers, bulbs, crowns and plantlets, and anything that regrows from fragments (trad, Madeira vine, Singapore daisy, mother-of-millions). I suggest this as a precaution.

Not in your home compost. Rules vary by council, so check yours.

Also watch for

More weeds from North Shore council lists that turn up in gardens:

Weed	Quick ID & note
Climbing asparagus <i>Asparagus africanus</i> REGIONAL	Scrambling vine with woody stems up to 12 m; small white flowers; orange berries when ripe. Report to council.
Ming asparagus fern <i>A. macowanii</i> REGIONAL	Upright shrub 1–2.5 m; dense clusters of fragrant white flowers in spring. Report to council.
Pampas grass <i>Cortaderia</i> spp. REGIONAL	Huge clumping grass with tall white or pink plumes. Don't buy, sell or move it.
Cape ivy <i>Delairea odorata</i>	Vine with glossy, fleshy leaves with 5–7 pointed lobes, smelly when crushed; clusters of small yellow flowers. Can blanket trees.
Turkey rhubarb <i>Rumex sagittatus</i>	Climber or creeper with soft, arrow-shaped leaves and clusters of papery-winged fruit; regrows from tubers. Bag it.
Jasmine <i>Jasminum polyanthum</i>	Vigorous climber; leaves of 5–9 leaflets; scented white flowers, pink underneath.
Cockspur coral tree <i>Erythrina crista-galli</i>	Small deciduous tree to 6 m; 3 leaflets; scarlet pea flowers. Tree rules may apply.
Taiwan lily <i>Lilium formosanum</i>	Lily to 2 m with thin leaves up to 15 cm long, smaller towards the top. A garden escape.
Cocos palm <i>Syagrus romanzoffiana</i>	Single-trunk palm averaging 12 m; hanging clusters of orange fruit; old fruit and dead fronds hang on. Tree rules may apply.
Rhizomatous bamboo <i>Phyllostachys</i> spp.	Running bamboos (golden, black) that spread underground.
Kikuyu <i>Cenchrus clandestinus</i>	Runner lawn grass. Fine as lawn, but keep it out of bush edges with edging.

Big job, or not sure? Vines in tree canopies, large weedy trees, steep slopes, herbicide near water or a whole overgrown yard are best left to a professional. See my *Safe Weed Removal* sheet.



Sources

- NSW DPI WeedWise species profiles (identification, impacts, control, disposal, biosecurity duty): weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au, accessed October 2026.
- NSW Government: "Control invasive weeds in NSW" and the general biosecurity duty: nsw.gov.au/regional-and-primary-industries/biosecurity/weeds
- Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW); Greater Sydney Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2023–2027 (Local Land Services).
- PlantNET, NSW Flora Online (fishbone fern status; panic veldtgrass description): plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au
- Sydney North Sub-Regional Weeds Committee list; Hornsby Shire Council Blue Gum High Forest page; NSW BioNet threatened community profile (Blue Gum High Forest).
- Hornsby Shire Council & Ku-ring-gai Council waste guides (weeds in green bins).
- Birds in Backyards (BirdLife Australia): "Getting your garden ready".
- RF Horticulture weeds list and native-plants list (compiled from WeedWise, PlantNET and council sources).

Herbicides: I deliberately don't give products or rates. Always follow the registered label or APVMA permit. Fishbone fern and panic veldtgrass removal methods are general bush-regeneration practice, not WeedWise text. Weed rules change, so check the WeedWise profile for the latest.

Weeds winning? Call in backup.

I can work out what's in your garden, remove weeds safely and fill the gaps with good plants. One-off clean-ups or regular visits.

Get in touch for a quote:

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