



## Preventing QFF in the Yarra Valley

<p><b>Learn</b></p>  	<p><b>Look</b></p> 	<p><b>Monitor</b></p> 
<p><b>REGIONAL COORDINATOR 0490381999</b>  <b>DEDJTR 136186</b>  <b>Agronomy consultant</b></p>		

In March, Bronwyn Koll, the Fruit Fly Regional Coordinator in the Yarra Valley spoke to Landcare members about the Queensland fruit fly, which has recently been found in the Yarra Valley area. Bronwyn is responsible for implementing the Yarra Valley Fruit Fly Regional Action Plan, and can be contacted at the phone number above.

**Next Landcare Meeting**

**May** – Healthy dams workshop. Field trip with discussion about how to maintain environmentally healthy dams. Organised by the Northern Yarra Landcare Network. Details will be sent out soon.

## President's Report

At the end of summer the bush often looks parched and exhausted but this March it was tinder dry and the weather is still very warm. The spectre of the Millenium Drought is still there and while Perth is a long way from Chum Creek, I was unpleasantly surprised to learn from a Four Corners program that Perth now depends on three desalination plants. It is extremely important to maintain all our streams in the Chum Creek catchment in healthy condition and increase their resilience to future droughts. The best way to do this is by protecting and restoring riparian vegetation, particularly in tiny headwater streams. Two Chum Creek members, Evelyn and Michael Feller have been attending workshops given by Melbourne Water to develop their next 5 year Healthy Waterways Strategy. We have been able to stress the importance of Chum Creek and other tributaries of the Watts system, like the Grace Burn. Not surprisingly, actions that Melbourne Water have identified as critical to improving stream health have been increasing vegetation cover, controlling storm water and litter, and greater involvement of residents in citizen science and in education. We also hope that our next workshop in April on Healthy Dams will give us some ideas in improving habitat and water conservation. Hopefully soon we will have enough wet weather to resume our plantings. Please contact us if you need information about the shire's Ribbons of Green program or Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage program which assist landowners to replant riparian vegetation.

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## Chum Creek Landcare news

### Third Chum Creek Survey report is now available

The report from the 2017 survey of Chum Creek and its adjacent vegetation, from where it crosses Lowes Rd. down to near where it meets the Watts River, is now available. If you would like a copy, contact us at [chumcklandcare@gmail.com](mailto:chumcklandcare@gmail.com) or phone 5962 5227.

### Chum Creek water quality report is available

The results of our assessment of the water quality of Chum Creek during 2016 are now available in a report which can be accessed from our website on the activities/reports page.

### Work will soon be underway to produce a field brochure to assist bird identification in our area

We intend to produce a colour brochure with photos and brief descriptions of birds known to occur in our area. This will be distributed free to Chum Creek Landcare members. With a waterproof covering, this should assist bird identification and increase interest in local birds.

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## Featured Weeds – Inkweed and Ragwort

### Inkweed (sometimes called Pokeweed) (*Phytolacca octandra*)

Inkweed is a short-lived herbaceous plant or small shrub growing up to 3 m tall. It was originally native to tropical America, but is now a weed of roadsides, creek lines, poorly-managed pastures and waste land in southern and eastern Australia and in the coastal districts of south-western Western Australia.

It has the following distinguishing features:

- a large herbaceous plant or small shrub growing to 3 m, but usually around 1 m tall.
- branched stems which are initially greenish or pink, but become reddish and hairless.



- alternately arranged leaves which are green at first, but often turn reddish with age.
- inconspicuous greenish-white flowers which have 5 small petals and are almost stalkless and borne in elongated clusters (10-15 cm long). Flowers are produced throughout the year, but mainly November to May in SE Australia.
- fruit (4-8 mm across) are berries that turn from green to red and then purplish-black in colour when fully ripe. They are flattened (i.e. depressed-globose) and usually have eight shallow lobes, so they resemble tiny pumpkins. They also contain a reddish-coloured juice.



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Inkweed reproduces by seed. These seeds are usually dispersed by birds and other animals (e.g. foxes) that eat its fruit.

Inkweed contains a number of toxic compounds. In WA numerous cases of poisoning of horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and dogs have been reported. It is suspected of poisoning cattle, fowls and pigs in eastern Australia but the evidence is circumstantial. Overseas a few fatal cases of children eating the berries have been recorded. Although there is still some confusion over the general toxicity, the Queensland government states that all parts of the plant are poisonous. Symptoms from ingestion may include headache, burning in the mouth, abdominal cramping, vomiting and diarrhoea. The acrid sap can cause skin irritation.

Problems with Inkweed can be reduced by removing stock from Inkweed-infested areas.

**Management and Control:** Cultivation provides good control. In pastures a heavy railway line or something similar can be dragged which uproots Inkweed and provides partial cheap control. Individual plants can then be removed by cutting through the roots at least 50 mm below ground level to prevent re-sprouting. Spraying the plants with diesel provides good control. Burning generally provides little control and the plants re shoot from the base.

In open areas, a blanket wiper applying 1 L glyphosate(450g/L) in 2 L water can be used. Single plants may be sprayed with diesel.

Infestations within 5 km of the target site will need to be controlled to prevent birds spreading seeds.

Otherwise, seedlings will need to be controlled annually wherever birds roost. Seedlings may be manually removed but older plants tend to break off and regrow unless cut below ground level with a mattock.

Inkweed refuse should be burned or hot mulched. It should not be dumped in or near bushland.

More information is available at -

<http://www.weedbusters.org.nz/weed-information/phytolacca-octandra/59/>

[http://www.herbiguide.com.au/Descriptions/hg\\_Inkweed.htm](http://www.herbiguide.com.au/Descriptions/hg_Inkweed.htm)

### **Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*. also used - *Jacobaea vulgaris*)**

Ragwort is an upright and relatively long-lived (i.e. biennial or perennial) herbaceous plant usually growing 45-120 cm tall, but occasionally reaching up to 1.8 m in height. It is native to north-western Africa, Europe and western and central Asia, but has become widely naturalised in southern Australia (NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, SE South Australia, and SW Western Australia).

It has the following distinguishing features:

- an upright and long-lived herbaceous plant that forms a basal rosette of leaves during the early stages of growth.
- it later produces one or more upright stems that are much-branched towards the top of the plant.
- its deeply-divided leaves are dark green and mostly hairless above, and somewhat paler and hairy underneath.

- its bright yellow daisy-like flower-heads (20-25 mm across) are borne in dense clusters at the tops of the branches and have 12-15 elongated 'petals'.
- the bases of the flower-heads are surrounded by about thirteen small greenish bracts that have black or brown tips.
- it gives off an unpleasant smell when damaged.

Reproduction occurs via seed and from pieces of the long-lived crowns. Seeds germinate from spring to autumn, with a peak in autumn, and grow slowly to form a rosette of leaves about 50 mm wide by summer on a strong rootstock. This continues forming leaves over the next autumn, winter and spring producing a 'cabbage' type of growth. In spring, flowering stems emerge around November and flowering occurs from late summer to early autumn. Seeds are ripe within a few weeks of flowering. The plants normally die after flowering or the flowering stems die back leaving the perennial crown.



Seed germinates in horse dung from horses fed on contaminated feed.

A multi stemmed plant can produce 250,000 seeds per year. Seeds do not germinate when buried more than 25 mm deep and will last buried in the soil for over 8 years.

Most dispersal of this species is thought to be a result of seeds being spread by wind, water, animals, vehicles, humans and in contaminated agricultural produce. Most seed falls within 5-20 metres of the parent plant, some travel up to 100 metres, but some can be blown kilometres. Seeds can be carried in water and survive long periods of immersion. Seed is also spread by attachment to wool and fur of animals and to vehicles and machinery. It is spread as a contaminant of hay and chaff.



Ragwort is a vigorous and invasive species of disturbed and denuded areas and it tends to form almost exclusive stands of Ragwort if allowed to establish. Areas in which the forest cover has been removed and not replaced by well managed pasture or crops are particularly vulnerable to invasion.

Ragwort can be invasive on roadsides, in forestry plantations, native forests and woodlands, threatening biodiversity in these areas. The weed is poisonous to grazing animals, both when fresh and dried in fodder. It causes cumulative liver damage leading to photosensitisation, jaundice, wasting and sometimes death in animals. Dairy cattle forced to graze ragwort produce tainted milk. Ragwort is a major pasture weed particularly on land grazed by cattle and horses and on dairy farms. It produces dense foliage close to the ground which suppresses and prevents regeneration of other vegetation. Ragwort competes strongly with more desirable plants, reducing pasture productivity and the value of agricultural land.

Ragwort is regarded as an environmental weed in Victoria and Tasmania. In Victoria it is prohibited and must be eradicated or controlled in the Goulburn region, and all reasonable steps must be taken to control the weed and prevent its spread in regions south and east of the Goulburn region, such as the Chum Creek area.

**Management and Control:** An integrated control program is required.

For pastures, increase pasture competition to reduce the survival of Ragwort seedlings. Glyphosate herbicide is effective but tends to leave the area bare and prone to re-infestation. Rope wick or blanket wiper application of non selective herbicides can give good levels of control. Heavy grazing with sheep or goats is also used. Cultivation must be repeated regularly to be effective.

In bush areas, isolated plants and their roots, to a depth of 200 mm, can be manually removed. Infestations can be sprayed with glyphosate before seeds are set and the area can then be planted with indigenous species.

Ragwort that is slashed, pulled, cut or broken close to the soil surface will produce new growth from the cut crown or small pieces of root that are left in the soil. Plants can regenerate from root fragments less than 2.5 cm long within 2 months. Effective manual control methods require removal of the crown and all the larger roots. Hand pulling is not generally effective during winter or spring as seedlings and small plants are difficult to remove, larger plants are often very strongly anchored into the ground, and root fragments often regrow. Disturbance of the soil also exposes buried seed to light, resulting in more germination. Hand pulling can be used to control flowering ragwort, but the flowering heads should be placed in bags to prevent spread of seeds and later burnt to prevent seed germination. Small infestations can be chipped out using a shovel or mattock.

Ragwort quickly grows back after slashing or mowing, often within a few weeks. Slashing must be followed up with chemical application and/or cultivation. No herbicide will completely eradicate ragwort infestations in one application. Because ragwort has a large proportion of biomass in the crown and root system below ground level, getting an effective amount of herbicide into the crowns and roots is one of the main challenges of herbicidal control. To best achieve this, it is important that the plants are not under stress (e.g. from drought or extreme temperatures) at the time of spraying, and are actively growing. A herbicide treatment program should primarily be targeted at seedlings and rosettes during autumn and spring.

More information is available at –

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/a-z-of-weeds/ragwort>

[http://www.sgl.n.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ragwort\\_Management.pdf](http://www.sgl.n.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ragwort_Management.pdf)

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## Events of interest

**Talk on Insects of the mountain ash forest, by Andrea Canzano, organized by Fauna and Toolangi.**

**Friday, 11 May, at 7.30pm** in the Toolangi Community Centre, Toolangi.

Andrea is an entomologist with experience in insect conservation and invertebrate biodiversity assessment in Victoria. She is particularly interested in the ecology and conservation of the Eltham copper butterfly. Her talk will be on invertebrates, focusing on insects

Cost: \$2.00 donation. RSVP by 9 May to

[faunatoolangi3777@gmail.com](mailto:faunatoolangi3777@gmail.com) or phone 0403 071 157



Sawfly larvae on eucalypt leaf.

**Manningham Environment Seminars (Warrandyte) – Underground Lovers – Exploring the clandestine relationships between trees and fungi. By Dr. Alison Pouliot.**

**Wednesday, 2 May, 7.30 - 9 pm. Evening seminar at River View Room, Grand Hotel, 110 Yarra St., Warrandyte.**

Although little known, the roots of almost every tree in the Australian landscape are intimately entwined with fungi. These relationships extend beyond trees and include every orchid and most shrubs and grasses. These mutually beneficial relationships are the secret to their success in our highly variable climate and nutrient-deficient soils. Fungi not only help plants access water and nutrients, but also increase their resistance to drought and disease. Fungi build architecture in soils, aerating them and allowing water to

gently percolate to deeper horizons. While often maligned by gardeners, the great majority of fungi are friends, not foes.

Join ecologist and environmental photographer Dr. Alison Pouliot in an illustrated and interactive seminar as she explores these fascinating relationships and shares her knowledge on ways to encourage fungi to flourish in our gardens, parks and local environments.

Participants are encouraged to bring along fungi for identification. Please Note: Fungi can only be collected from participants private property and cannot be from public land or roadsides as a permit is required to collect fungi on public land.

This evening session will be followed by a field trip the next day.



Fungi in upper Chum Creek. Photo: M. Feller.

#### **Thursday, 3 May, 9 – 11am. Field trip.**

Alison will introduce participants to the diversity, ecology and curiosities of fungi found in the region and their various habitat types. Participants will learn some of the basic skills used to identify fungi in the field using multiple senses. The relationships between fungi and various plant species and different habitat types will be discussed.

Bookings are essential as places are limited, email [csadmin@manningham.vic.gov.au](mailto:csadmin@manningham.vic.gov.au) or phone 9840 9124. The meeting point for this field trip will be provided when you attend the evening seminar.

#### **Manningham Environment Seminars (Warrandyte) – Threatened orchids of Middle Yarra and the Warrandyte-Kinglake nature conservation link. By Cam Beardsell.**

**Wednesday, 6 June, 7.30 - 9 pm. Evening seminar at River View Room, Grand Hotel, 110 Yarra St., Warrandyte.**



Local ecologist, environmentalist and Parks Victoria Ranger Cam Beardsell will speak about seven of our most locally threatened native orchid species, their threats and management. Cam will provide numerous colour photos to visually aid his discussion of the conservation aspects of these orchids including; threats such as the impacts of habitat loss, fragmentation and herbivore grazing, ecological interactions with fire, pollinators and associate plants. Cam will also discuss management programs such as population recovery and site protection relevant to these species.

The endangered Rosella Spider Orchid (*Caladenia rosella*) which grows not far from Chum Creek, in Christmas Hills and nearby areas.

For information about Manningham Environment seminars: phone 03 9840 9124 or email [csadmin@manningham.vic.gov.au](mailto:csadmin@manningham.vic.gov.au)



# Healesville Community Renewable Energy Inc

## Calendar of Free Events – February to June 2018

**Healesville CoRE has organised to run a series of FREE events for our community in the first half of 2018.**

These community events are for the purpose of increasing knowledge for, and engaging with, the general community. Healesville CoRE is a group of community volunteers dedicated to bringing renewable energy to Healesville.

Date + Time	Name of Event	Time
<b>Sat 24 Feb 10.30am – 12.30pm</b>	<b>Solar Hot Water including Heat Pumps</b>	<b>2 hours</b>

Facilitated by local experts in the field and industry specialists. The focus will be on what households, community groups and businesses need to know about solar hot water before committing to buy a system. The session will include roof top, split systems and heat pump systems.

<b>Sat 28 April 10.30am – 12.30pm</b>	<b>Solar Electricity Production &amp; Storage</b>	<b>2 hours</b>
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Facilitated by local experts and industry specialists, this session will provide information and understanding for community members about the complex area of community solar energy on roof tops for homes, community buildings and businesses, and how energy is stored and distributed. Find answers to all your questions.

<b>Sat 26 May Time: TBA</b>	<b>Solar Energy for Landlords &amp; Tenants – Income from Solar Production</b>	<b>2 hours</b>
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Facilitated by local experts & Bjorn Sturmborg from SunTenants. This workshop will provide information and understanding for tenants and landlords about how newly developed technology can enable the landlord to sell power to the tenant so that both gain financially. Increased income for landlords and money saving on power bills for tenants.

<b>Thurs 21 June 7.00 – 9.00pm</b>	<b>“Our solar town: from dreams to reality” A night of review and celebration in movements towards Healesville’s net zero, solar energy future.</b>	<b>2 hours</b>
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In June 2017 Healesville CoRE was launched at a community gathering. In one year we have achieved a lot. Come and hear our project partners talk about our projects that are being put into place and that are envisioned for the future to transform Healesville into a Net Zero town – a town that uses only renewable energy. Hear how the residents and businesses can save money and how we as a community can invest in Healesville's future.

**See website for further information, venue and free information. Details for each event will appear closer to the date of the event.**

**Pre-registration:**  
[www.healesvillecore.org.au](http://www.healesvillecore.org.au)  
[contact@healesvillecore.org.au](mailto:contact@healesvillecore.org.au)

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# How effective are nest boxes in Victoria?

Share your nest box news and help make nest boxes better



Nest boxes are widely used in Victoria to enhance habitat for wildlife, and are installed for a variety of species by many organisations and community groups.

This represents a significant investment in time, energy and resources to install, maintain and monitor nest boxes, and includes many volunteer hours.

Although some information on the use of nest boxes by different species is available, it is limited and does not capture the breadth of where nest boxes are being installed in Victoria, and their success in enhancing the conservation of species.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is collating information on projects that have installed nest boxes in Victoria. The aim is to understand the extent and distribution of nest boxes, which species are targeted, which species use them, and whether monitoring of nest box occupancy or maintenance is undertaken. We are also interested in the type of monitoring data being collected.

This information will be used to inform better design, placement and use of nest boxes to suit animals and their conservation needs, as well as supporting those constructing and installing nest boxes. This is a call-out for information about nest boxes that you may know about anywhere in Victoria.

If you or your organisation have been responsible for nest box installation or monitoring in Victoria, you are invited to join in and contribute information.

Please contact us by the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and we will ask you about various aspects of your nest box projects including:

- Where you have installed nest boxes
- Number of boxes
- Type of box
- Target species/purpose
- Monitoring & maintenance
- Data collection & storage
- Use of boxes by animals

We look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your help in improving nest boxes.

**Please contact us by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

[phoebe.macak@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:phoebe.macak@delwp.vic.gov.au)

Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research

This is part of DELWP's Biodiversity On-ground Actions 2017-2018 program