

# Managing rubber vine



## Section 2

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## Reducing the risk of infestation

Though in the long term, prevention is the best way to control weeds, this is not always possible. In the case of rubber vine, natural means—wind, water and birds—easily disperse the seed. New infestations must therefore be identified quickly and controlled before they become established. Several of the landholder case studies indicate that controlling rubber vine would have been easier if they had taken steps to remove it before it ‘took off’.

Maintaining good pasture competition is also beneficial in preventing the establishment and spread of rubber vine.

### Rubber vine containment line

Prevention of spread is a major objective of the national strategic plan for rubber vine. One of the strategies used is the rubber vine containment line (RVCL), which:

- defines a line at which to stop the spread of rubber vine
- highlights outlying infestations for priority control
- defines a long-term intention of removing all rubber vine outside the line
- encourages landholders within and near the containment line to participate in management programs that aim to increase their knowledge and interest in control of the pest
- is a tool that can be used in developing strategic plans, including pest management plans, regional plans, state plans and national strategies
- can be used to measure the success of the fight against rubber vine.



▲ Seeds are easily dispersed by wind, water and birds.



▲ The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (NRM&E) regularly reviews the RVCL, in collaboration with the National Rubber Vine Management Group and other regional natural resource management groups.



## Planning

Careful planning of a control program can save time and money and define a path toward achieving the desired outcome. To do this, it is necessary to have a realistic view of how rubber vine impacts on overall property management.

Planning takes place at a number of levels: from paddock to property level; at local government level through the development of local government pest management plans; at catchment level; and at a regional level through regional strategy groups. To help create a greater sense of involvement, it may be advantageous to involve others who are directly affected in the planning process.

A successful plan cannot be developed in isolation from other property operations and must be integrated into the overall property management plan. The management principles suggested here for control or eradication of rubber vine can be applied to other weeds on a property and ideally, strategies for management of all weeds should be included on a single plan.

It is recommended that a weed control plan have at least a 5–10 year time frame and be reviewed annually.

A range of planning processes can be adopted. There are six steps in the following suggested control and eradication plan.

### Step 1: Identify and prioritise problem areas

- The easiest way to identify problem areas is by using a map of the property. This can be a satellite image or an aerial or hand-drawn map. The more accurate and more current it is, the easier it will be to estimate and calculate control costs precisely, and to track the long-term effectiveness of control programs.
- Separate transparent overlays are useful when developing maps—one to indicate property improvements, one for vegetation types and natural features, and another devoted solely to weed infestations. Using different overlays can make each section of the map easier to interpret and can also be helpful when making management decisions (e.g. determining the best place to put fences).
- On the map, outline all natural features, improvements and property boundaries; then indicate areas of rubber vine, noting the size and density of each infestation.
- Prioritise the areas for control or eradication at the property level and at a paddock-by-paddock level, keeping in mind features outside the property such as seed sources, seed dispersal routes or vulnerable areas.
- Consider what legal or ethical responsibilities you may have (e.g. the threat of rubber vine to neighbouring properties).
- Consider relevant local government, catchment or regional priorities and plans.
- To help prevent infestations from spreading, focus initial control efforts on isolated outbreaks. A good rule of thumb is to start with the section that will be easiest to control and then gradually work towards the thicker patches.



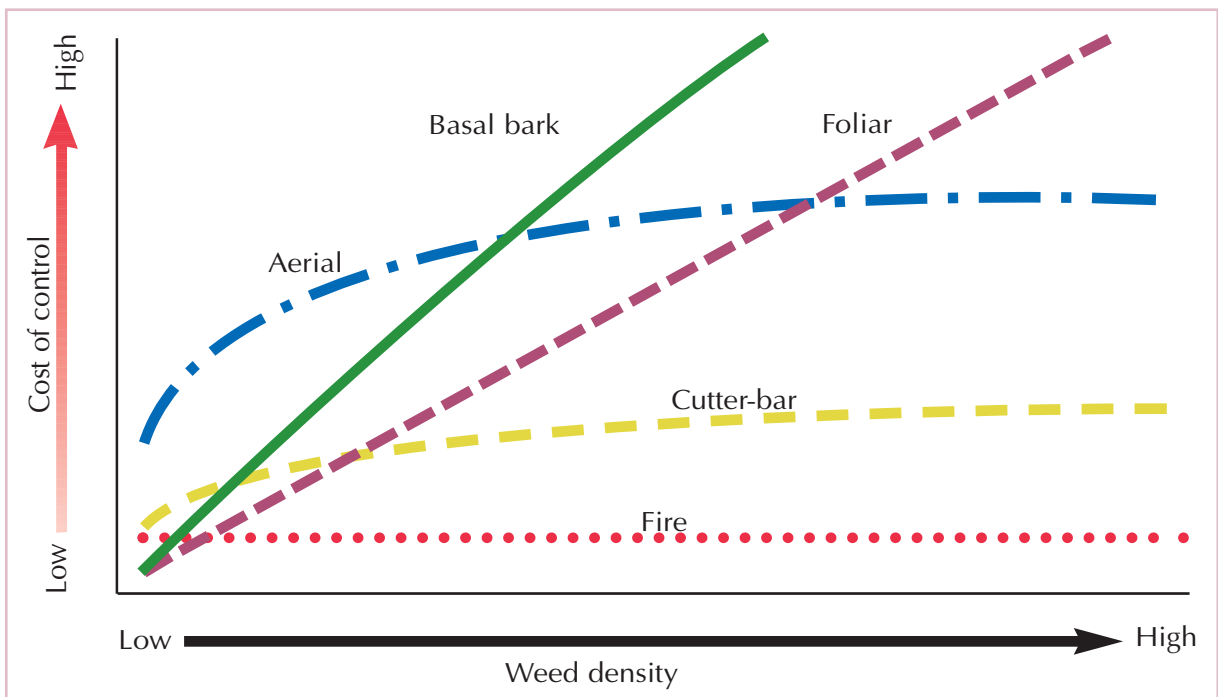


### Step 2: Determine the control options

- Identify what resources are already available or affordable, such as spray equipment, machinery and labour. This will indicate which control methods will be the most economic and beneficial.
- Decide which methods will be required at all phases of the program—initial control, follow-up and ongoing monitoring.
- As there is now a comprehensive range of methods available for rubber vine control, decide which will be most appropriate in the given situation. Figure 1 is a guide to the cost efficiency of different techniques in relation to infestation size. It is usually necessary to use a combination of methods to complete the job effectively (see p. 14).

### Step 3: Develop a financial plan

- Estimate the cost of the management strategies and control options for each priority.
- Evaluate the costs of the chosen methods in relation to those of other operations currently occurring on the property to ensure they are economically viable.
- Integrate these costs into short-term and long-term property budgets.
- Find out if there are any financial incentives available to assist with control programs.
- Consider all costs (including the hourly running costs of machinery and labour). If necessary, seek advice from local government or departmental weeds officers before committing a large amount of money.
- Take into account the cost of future control—this is frequently underestimated.



▲ Figure 1 Cost comparison of rubber vine control techniques.



#### **Step 4: Schedule activities**

- Consider how effective various control methods will be at different times of the year and balance this with the time available for carrying them out.
- Try to integrate weed control with other property management activities (e.g. combining a routine burn with the control of rubber vine).
- Schedule any weed control activities for the year.
- Make rubber vine control a regular part of property management. When developing a plan, allow for monitoring and follow-up after the initial treatment, and ensure that follow-up occurs within a year.

#### **Step 5: Monitor progress**

- Monitoring should be an integral part of any control program. It can be used to check how a treatment worked, to identify areas of regrowth and to find out where follow-up is required.
- Use the map of the property as a starting-point record of the problem before any control work has commenced.
- On the map, show any new or previously treated areas of infestation.
- To show any changes resulting from control work, take several photographs from the same point over time.
- Document control costs and resource requirements.
- Incorporate monitoring activities into the yearly timetable.

#### **Step 6: Follow up what was started**

- As no control method for rubber vine results in 100 per cent kill and because some regrowth is almost guaranteed, follow-up control is crucial.
- From the monitoring sites, identify areas where follow-up is needed as a result of regrowth or seed germination.

#### **Helpful tips**

- As there is no 'quick-fix' for rubber vine control, developing a management plan and committing to it are essential for the long-term effectiveness of your efforts.
- Any control plan is useless without implementation. If (because of the size of the problem or the lack of experience) it is difficult to start planning, it is advisable to seek professional advice and/or to start on a smaller scale.
- While the plan must be structured, it should be flexible enough to allow for changes brought about by uncontrollable external influences such as drought and fluctuating commodity prices.
- The plan must be reviewed annually to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the control options and strategies implemented.



