Cat's claw creeper *(Dolichandra unguis-cati)*

Weed management guide

Weed type
Climber

November 2022

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west

In NSW, weeds are regulated by the NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015. All land managers have a General Biosecurity Duty to contain the spread of weeds.

"General Biosecurity Duty means that any person dealing with plant matter must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable)."

The Regional priority for Cat's claw creeper is to protect assets from the weed's impacts and to prevent its arrival and establishment in the region. In order to achieve this, Land Managers are asked to: *Mitigate the risk of new weeds being introduced to their land and reduce impacts on priority assets. The plant should not be bought, sold, grown, carried or released into the environment.*

For further information, contact your local Biosecurity (Weeds) Officer via Central West Local Land Services or visit NSW WeedWise.

NSW WeedWise

Habit and description

Cat's claw creeper is a rapidly climbing vine native to tropical dry forests of Central and South America. Leaves are opposite on the main stem usually in pairs (leaflets) with a tendril between the leaflets. Leaflets are dark green above and lighter below, usually 2-7cm long and 1-3cm wide. Tendrils three-pronged. Flowers are yellow, trumpet shaped with 5 fused petals. Oranges lines often present inside the floral tube. Spring flowering with flowers solitary or in clusters on the leaf axis. Seed pods ripen to a brown colour, 15-45cm long with a leathery feel. Each pod can contain 40-80 seeds. Seeds with two papery wings.

Photo: © John Hosking | NSW DPI

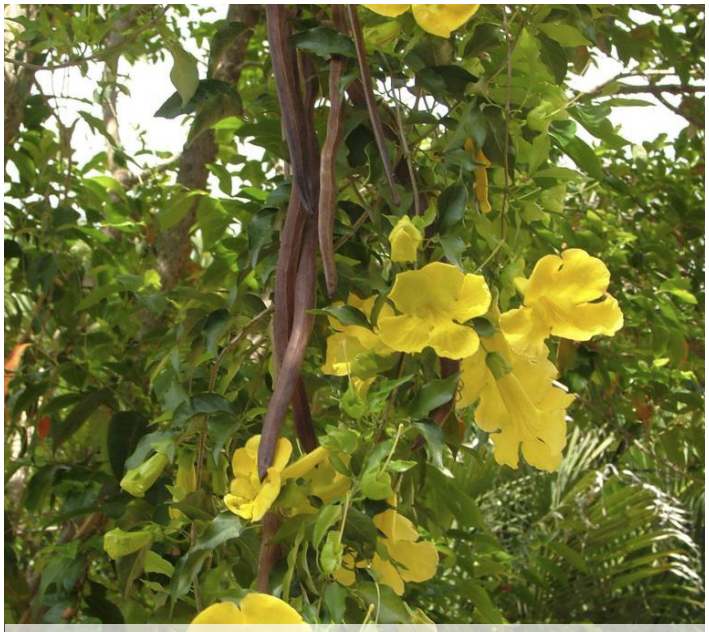

Photo: © John Hosking | NSW DPI

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Photo: © John Hosking | NSW DPI

Reproduction and spread

Cat's claw creeper can reproduce and spread by seed or plant material such as roots and tubers. Seed pods mature from February to May when they start to drop from the vines. Some seeds can produce multiple seedlings. Winged seeds are spread by wind or water and germinate best in moist leaf litter. Mature plants can reproduce vegetatively from tubers and stems. Tubers can be produced on roots in the second year of growth and can sprout under moist conditions. Soil movement can also spread tubers.

Impacts

Agriculture

- Can cause losses to primary industries by shading and smothering fruit trees.
- Cover can interfere with fruit picking processes.
- Can damage infrastructure such as agricultural sheds or fences.

Native vegetation

- Cat's claw creeper is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) in Australia (NSW DPI, 2017).
- Listed as a Key Threatening Process in NSW.
- Forms dense mats that can smother and kill native ground cover.
- Climbs native trees and shrubs restricting growth or killing them.
- Change canopy structure in forests.
- Can alter water flow when trees fall into waterways.

Management

Chemical

- Spot spraying is an effective method for controlling plants that have not grown too high, while avoiding host plant.
- Cut stump method is best for larger plants by cutting stems as close to the ground as possible and applying herbicide.
- Seek the guidance of an experienced Weeds Officer for expert advice on herbicide use.
- Visit www.apvma.gov.au for a list of registered products, product labels and permit requirements.
- NSW DPI (2021) provides a list of recommended herbicides for the control of Cat's claw creeper at https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/CatsClawCreeper.

Non-chemical

- Physical removal can be used for younger plants that have just begun to climb.
- Pull stems away from infrastructure/vegetation.
- Do not remove vines that have grown into a tree canopy, cut them 1 m from the ground and leave upper parts to die.
- There are two biological control agents in NSW including *Carvalhotingis visenda,* a leaf sucking tingid and *Hedwigiella jureceki*, a jewel beetle (Dhileepan et al. 2013).

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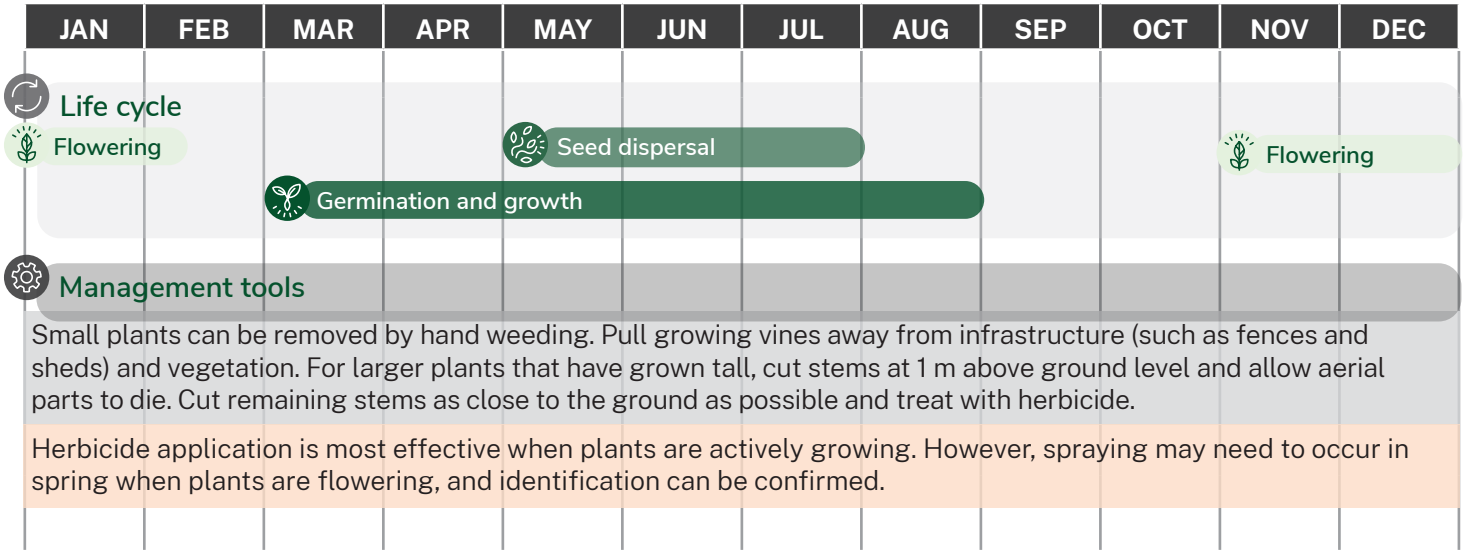
Management calendar



Optimal control options may vary depending on your location and climate. Consult an experienced Weeds Officer based in your local government area for control methods suited to your conditions.

All herbicides must be used in accordance with the herbicide label and permit requirements.

Further information

For more information on your general biosecurity duties, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity.

For the best guidance on how to meet this duty on your property, contact your expert Weeds Officer at your local council or via Local Land Services www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west.

NSW WeedWise

References

Dhileepan, K., Taylor, D. B. J., Lockett, C., & Treviño, M. (2013). *Cat's claw creeper leaf-mining jewel beetle Hylaeogena jureceki Obenberger (Coleoptera: Buprestidae), a host-specific biological control agent for Dolichandra unguis-cati (Bignoniaceae) in Australia.* Australian Journal of Entomology, 52(2), 175–181. https://doi.org/10.1111/aen.12014

NSW DPI. (2017). *Weed categories.* https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds/weed-categories

NSW DPI. (2021). *NSW WeedWise.* https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/CatsClawCreeper

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