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Over the past six months, the Victorian Gorse Taskforce committee members have been active at field days and presenting at gorse control demonstration events. We joined forces with Yarrowee Leigh Catchment Group and their Small Blocks, Big Dreams program and with the Healthy Landscapes program, led by Jason McAinch based with Macedon Ranges Shire Council, to place gorse control within the broader landscape context. The very active Upper Plenty Merri Catchment Landcare Group's gorse control demonstration day provided an opportunity to hear from Mitchell Shire's Sonia Sharkey about the shire's landholder weed control program, a comprehensive extension program backed by a local law. A great initiative supported by the shire's Landcare groups.

VGT's Peter Sporle (L) and Mitchell Shire's Sonia Sharkey (R). *Image credit D. Dawson*

Gorse conversations

This is a selection of what we heard at the October Elmore Field Days....some have it, some are very lucky (so far) ...the need for persistence, collaboration and stewardship to care for a local area.

Kyabram - "no, no gorse"
Mount Franklin - "targeted gorse in the past, now using it as a fence, yep, better do something about it"
Wangaratta - "treated for 5 years, got on top of it, no longer there"
Eppalock - "yes, need to get a sprayer"
Meredith - "lots in the cemetery grounds"
Rochester - "none"
Mansfield - "none, but I know it from fishing in New Zealand"
Ballarat - "too much gorse, people have stopped caring, why should I care"
Bendigo - "haven't seen it, but I go bushwalking so will keep an eye out"
Kilmore - "too many organisations, no collaboration, I'm frustrated by lack of coordinated approach"
Malmsbury - "burn, then mulch and spray over 100ha, I feel it's been successful to date"
Seymour - "first used machines, then sprayed, has been effective and I am continuing to control"

Prevention positive

The Gorse Conversations at Elmore Field Days indicate there are many areas in Regionally Controlled catchments where locals have not seen or experienced gorse. Recording known locations will help raise awareness and treat gorse early before it spreads. Our "Seen it? Report it. Treat it." campaign asks people to send an email to VGT (info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au), the Good Neighbour Program (goodneigbourprogram@deeca.vic.gov.au) or post a photo on iNaturalist if they see gorse. Please help with sightings. Would you like a *Seen it? Report it. Treat it.* 'bespoke' flyer for your area? Get in touch.

Gorse is Regionally Controlled in most catchments, meaning all land owners need to prevent its spread by **controlling** it. Gorse is Regionally Prohibited in the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority region. This means all land owners, private and public, must prevent its spread by **eradicating** gorse if it is found on their land in East Gippsland.

What is the science behind Cut and Paint?

Cut and Paint is a useful control technique particularly on small isolated gorse plants. The method calls for applying herbicide 20 seconds after cutting the stem close to the ground. Why 20 seconds? Here is a brief explanation.
A gorse plant is made up of roots, stem and leaves as spines (and flowers). The roots gather minerals and water from the soil and transport these up to the spines through the dead hollow tube cells known as xylem. Water evaporating from the leaves (transpiration) pulls the water up through the xylem; no energy is required.
Photosynthesis in the spines creates sugars and amino acids (source). Living cells arranged end-to-end, known as phloem, translocate these to parts of the plant where they are needed (sinks). This may be flowers when seed is forming, spines when new growth is rapid, or the roots when a plant is consolidating. Energy is needed to translocate.
Immediately after a gorse stem is cut, negative pressure in the xylem can pull the herbicide inward until air pockets form and halt the upward flow. The herbicide then moves laterally to the phloem and if translocation to the roots is already happening, the herbicide is pulled down. However, the phloem starts responding to the injury by plugging this pathway at the cut. So, speed in applying the herbicide matters. The 20 seconds is a good 'rule of thumb'. When a plant is setting seed, the phloem pull downward is less strong, so Cut and Paint is likely to be more successful when the gorse plant is not actively setting seed. Check out our video

Image generated with the assistance of AI

Get rid of that bulk! Spray smart.

Got a dense gorse infestation? Don't just spray into and over the spiny monster. Did you know that it can be more effective to **physically knock it back first**, then follow up with herbicide.

Why slash or mulch first?
Slashing or physically clearing before you spray can make a big difference:

- Opens up the infestation for better access.
- Stimulates regrowth making systemic herbicide more effective.
- Reduces the amount of herbicide needed.

The cost savings in reduced herbicide could be substantial. Check out Michaela's Story and 13 months later. The type of equipment you use will depend on your site and budget, check out options here.

Myth Busting Corner - Mowing

Does mowing kill gorse? A thousand times no!! What you end up with is the woody layer left over from last year's mowing, and the soft new shoot. You also expose the surrounding area to light so more gorse seeds are likely to germinate. If you did mow constantly, year after year, you will stop flowering and seed set, but no, the gorse does not die :(See our short vid here.

Gorse cannot be transported off a property (by law). This guide provides options for disposal.

Who can I contact about a gorse infestation that looks like it's a fire risk?

As the fire season approaches, VGT receives many queries like this. Here is one response we give:

The CFA lists the responsibilities of various agencies in fire risk management on its website (Who Does What). For example, each municipal council must appoint a Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO) who has the power to assess fire threats to life or property in their municipal district, and if necessary, issue fire prevention notices on owners or occupiers of land requiring them to take specified steps to remove or minimise that threat. Gorse, as a significant fire risk, may be considered by MFPO in their assessments and issuing of fire prevention notices.

The VGT and the CFA have produced an information brochure "Is gorse a threat to you?" and see our video here.

Gorse Biocontrol Update

In the Winter 2026 edition of Gorse Talk, Greg Lefoe, Senior Research Scientist, provided an update on the Agriculture Victoria project looking at the genetic differences between gorse populations in Australia and comparing them with plants from western Europe, where gorse originated. The goal is to find out whether those genetic differences help explain why some biocontrol agents work better in some areas, and whether we can improve biological control outcomes by selecting agents from closely matched gorse populations in Europe.
Gorse samples from Australia (Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales, and Western Australia) and Europe (Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Ireland and the UK) have now been collected and are being analysed. Interestingly, very few samples from Ireland have ever been tested before, important given the strong migration link with Ireland in the 1800s.

In the long run, this work could lead to more reliable gorse control and provide lessons for managing other widespread weeds.

Australian sampling sites *Image credit G. Lefoe*

European sampling sites *Image credit G. Lefoe*

Gorse Soft Shoot Moth (GSSM) is active in summer. Larvae develop within a silken tube at the gorse tips by mid-summer and adult moths emerge by late summer moving into the centre of the gorse bush to begin their winter suspended development. If you spot the larvae in the shoots of gorse, take a photo and upload it to iNaturalist. Information on where released biocontrol agents exist will help with further biocontrol work.

Image courtesy of G. Lefoe

Recognition for Dr John Gable

Dr John Gable passed away last year however he has been recognised in this year's Victorian Landcare Awards as the recipient of the Australian Government Individual Landcarer Award. John was an active participant of the Victorian Gorse Taskforce from 2016-2020. His knowledge, dedication, passion and desire to bring people together to care for their patch was second to none. And a genuinely lovely person! Read more here.

Victorian Gorse Taskforce

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2nd December, 2026
12.30 - 1.30pm @ Daylesford
All welcome

RSVP info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au
(location will be provided upon RSVP)

Why not join our active and friendly committee!
Warning...Lots of gorse talking occurs!!
(info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au)

Gorse resources

Available for your next information display or event
Email info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au
and list resource, quantity, address

Also available for download
vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

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