VICTORIAN GORSE TASKFORCE

GORSE TALK

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Committee Update

Welcome to Issue 8 of Gorse Talk

The first half of the year has been busy for the VGT, we kicked it off by holding our 2020/21 AGM in February and we are so happy that all our wonderful committee members are staying on for another year. We also want to warmly welcome back to the VGT committee Lisette Mill from Basalt to Bay Landcare Network.

This edition of Gorse Talk is especially great because it showcases some amazing stories from community gorse champions in south-west Victoria, who are committed to winning the war against gorse. The VGT understand the importance of storytelling and how it helps inspire and promote change, so we are on the look out for great gorse stories to share with our community.

We've also been busy redesigning our gorse identification guide which is now available on the VGT website. We've wrapped up our 2021/22 Community Grants Program as well as launched the 2022/23 Program. We are so happy to have supported Landcare Groups and Councils around the state by mailing out over 600 brochures that can be passed on to gorse affected communities.

Welcoming back Lisette Mill to the VGT

The VGT would like to welcome back to the committee Lisette Mill from Basalt to Bay Landcare Network.

Lisette sees gorse as enemy number one and will not stand by and watch it invade new areas. Lisette brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience about gorse control, community engagement and dedication to the gorse cause. We are delighted to have Lisette on again, she is a real team player that looks for collaboration and will always put her hand up to help where she can. **Welcome back Lisette.**

New Gorse Plant Identification guide available

We've redeveloped our gorse identification guide and it looks fantastic.

If you need help identifying gorse from other common native Victorian plants, then this guide is for you. It's short, sweet, and simple to use. You can find it on our website here. **We encourage groups looking for hardcopies to contact our Executive Officer on 0417 593 250 or info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au to arrange a mail out.**

Gorse *(Ulex europaeus)*
Plant identification guide

Tackling gorse takes effort, but doing nothing means it just gets worse

Use this guide to help identify gorse, a declared noxious weed, from a selection of common Victorian native plants that have similar features.

Seeds
- Seed pods are fine, densely haired oblong pods 10-20mm long by 6mm deep.
- Pods are green when young, turning dark brown when mature.
- Each pod contains two to six seeds measuring 3-4mm across with a very hard green or brown seed coat and yellow appendage.

Leaves
- Dark green, stalkless, narrow and stiff, resembling spines. Occurring in clusters along the branch.
- 6-30mm long by 1.5mm wide with a sharp spine at the tip. Spines and leaves have a waxy coating.

Seedlings
- Seedlings have soft hairy grey-green 'trifoliate' (three-leaflet) leaves.
- These leaves are lost as the plant matures and spines develop from three months of age.

Flowers
- Bright yellow pea-like flower 15-25mm long with a distinct coconut-like fragrance.

Once gorse is established, it is very difficult to eradicate. If left undisturbed, can grow up to 4m high and 3m diameter.

▶ Scan QR code opposite to download the VGT Gorse Best Practice Guide for further information

Common Victorian native plants that could be mistaken for gorse

	Seeds	Leaves	Seedlings	Flowers
Hedge Wattle Flowers are abundant in large yellow balls from August to November.				
Prickly Moses Light yellow flower spikes from June to December.				
Tree Violet Masses of tiny cream bell flowers from September to November followed by pale green to purple berries.				
Sweet Bursaria Masses of fragrant creamy white bunches of flowers from December to March.				

Explore the **Virtual Extension Officer**, an interactive tool designed to help you manage gorse. www.virtualextensionofficer.com.au

Victorian Gorse Taskforce
www.vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD

VGT social media competition winners

In April we ran a social media photo competition with three fantastic prize packs to give away.

We asked our Facebook and Instagram followers to submit their best gorse control in action photo. We were again overwhelmed with how far and wide our competition was seen and shared throughout the gorse community. Thank you to everyone that submitted a photo.

Check out our competition winners.

Dechlan and Tabatha Ellis

Phil Sansom

Pat Gregurke

Gorse Community Champion Stories

Working towards effective gorse control along regional roads in SW Victoria

by Lisette Mill –

I work for Basalt to Bay Landcare Network in SW Victoria. In 2018 we won a South West Alliance contract, a partnership between

Department of Transport and Fulton Hogan, to audit the contractor treatments on gorse I had mapped in 2017 and found on road reserves in Moyne Shire and Warrnambool City. This contract was refunded in 2021.

In the audit I visit each mapped gorse location six months after the spraying has been done. I walk it, flagging tape in hand ready to mark any gorse that was missed to account for the treatment impacts and highlight where infestations of gorse have not been treated emphatically enough. The percentage of missed gorse determines if that site gets a pass or a failure. That data is shared back and used to inform future decisions on who is awarded the treatment work next round. It's also used to build a picture of what pedantic gorse control does to reduce overall size of infestations and future treatment expense. Communities expect that when Crown land weed control is done, that it's done well.

The audit process since 2019 has resulted in a 70% reduction in the seeding of gorse in audited locations and has identified other gorse spots that would have otherwise been missed.

Hunting gorse on both open grassy roadsides and amongst the thick native bush on others has taken me deep into road reserves where few people venture. Occasionally I find a tethered goat. Other times evidence of past traffic accident. Always I find litter. But this year I also found native plant species that made my VicRoads Gorse control audits filled with the frisson of and extra layer of discovery.

Milky beauty heads *(calocephalus lacteus)*

Most of the places where gorse succeeds are not the highest conservation road reserves in the road network. They are weedy and the gorse often snuggles down, hidden by taller weeds.

Most of us probably think they're stuffed. But from what I am seeing, it's not just the continuous stretches of high conservation road reserves that support special native biodiversity. It is also in these weedy places.

Our Gorse Warrior Story

by Dechlan and Tabatha Ellis, 'Rocky Creek' Elmhurst Victoria

We learnt about gorse control the hard way – by letting it get away from us and then fighting hard to bring it back under control!

When we bought our beautiful bush block at Rocky Creek near Elmhurst in 2008, the previous owner had just completed an extensive program of pest and weed control. Rabbit burrows had been ripped, and thickets of gorse and blackberry in the creek line had been effectively sprayed. We had a young family and were living in Melbourne. We were both working full-time in demanding jobs. We only managed to get up to our block once a month or so when other commitments allowed. We kept on top of the rabbits pretty well, but the gorse was another story.

After a couple of years, we noticed some gorse regrowth in the areas previously sprayed. But the plants looked small and relatively slow growing.

***"We'll get around to that, once we've got some more time"* was our approach. That was a big mistake.**

We had both grown up in the city and to be honest, we didn't know any better. The gorse seed banks were germinating over a broader area and in far greater numbers than we had appreciated. By the time we realised it was becoming a problem, the new gorse plants had flowered themselves, and were growing strongly. We had effectively lost control of the weed problem.

2020 brought us the COVID-19 pandemic, but also the opportunity for us to finally deal with our gorse problem. We had both just retired and were taking a break at our bush block when the first lockdown happened in Melbourne. We decided to stay at Rocky Creek for the duration. We thought this would be 6 weeks – it ended up being almost 5 months! We resolved that now was the time to tackle the gorse. In assessing our options, we wanted to minimise the use of chemical herbicides as much as possible. Much of the gorse was inside a sensitive creek line with steep banks so mechanical control was impractical. We did some research, including learning from other people's experiences via the Victorian Gorse Taskforce. We decided

that the best option for us was to use the cut and paint technique.

Before

After

Using some simple tools – a hand pruning saw, secateurs and a tree branch lopper – and a paint brush and pot, or a foam-tipped shoe polish applicator, we cut the gorse plants off at ground level and painted them with neat glyphosate, one by one. We dragged the gorse cuttings to the side and stockpiled them in a clear area. This really helped us visually clear each area of gorse infestation we were dealing with so that we maximised our clearance rate.

It was a painstakingly slow, and extremely labour-intensive process! But it was also very effective and satisfying. We finished clearing the property of gorse just before the lockdown in Melbourne lifted in October 2020 – it took us probably 2 months of full-time work. But we are very happy with the results.

Before

After

When we followed up again in June 2021, 12 months after the clearing, close to 100% of the gorse plants we had cut and painted were stone dead – no regrowth. In some areas we had cleared, native grasses and reeds in the creek line had grown so much that there were almost no new gorse plants. In other more open areas, the massive seedbank had seen new gorse seedlings germinate and start to grow. So, we went over the same areas and cleared them again.

Cut-and-paint remains our control method of choice. But when the conditions are right (enough rain to soften the ground and cool weather so you can work hard for longer), we've found pulling out gorse seedlings and small plants, roots and all, is an equally effective technique (and it is chemical free). It is just as labour intensive as cut and paint. But the main advantage is that it kills gorse plants while they are still very small. The larger the plant grows the harder it is for us to deal with. We use some simple tools – a pair of pliers and/or a tree popper. It's very satisfying!

So, what have we learnt? Firstly, with the benefit of hindsight it was probably a bit ambitious for two recently retired people in their 50's to weed a 150-acre property by hand – it was hard! The most important lesson for us has been that it is much better to keep on top of gorse every year, because it is far harder to tackle when it's got away from you than to keep it under control regularly – eternal vigilance is the key. We have also had to accept that this is a decades long commitment – the existing seedbank could last 30 years or more. But we are confident our two-part strategy is working. The first part of our strategy is to stop adding further to the seedbank – by clearing the property every year we will work hard to make sure any new plants don't mature enough to flower and seed because it is within the 18 month or so lifecycle from germination for this to occur. The second part of our strategy is to grow native plants to outcompete the gorse – if we can get native trees, grasses, reeds and shrubs to deny the gorse seedbanks sunlight and water, we think that we can dramatically decrease new gorse growth. We are already seeing this work effectively in and near the creek line. It hasn't yet helped us in the more open areas – weeds love bare ground – but we'll keep trying.

We are proud to call ourselves Gorse Warriors!
It does feel like a war – a long and hard campaign against a hardy and resilient foe. But every time we see the cleared areas flourishing with a greater diversity of native plants and new habitat for the menagerie of native animals that now call our place home, it's all worth it.

VGT Community Grant Program

2021/2022 Community Grant Program wrap up

The VGT supported nine groups as part of the 2021/2022 Community Grant Program. We were thrilled to see the achievements of each project.

Some amazing, combined results include:

- **80ha** of gorse controlled
- **44** landholders involved

- **44** three-year voluntary work agreements signed
- **$30,019** of VGT funding distributed
- **$164,000** total program expenditure
- **Main control methods used** – mulching, foliar spraying, ecoblade slashing, drone herbicide application, cut and paint.

Here's what one landholder said about our grants program

"The funding provided through the Victorian Gorse Task Force (VGTF) has been greatly appreciated and their support has been instrumental in us continuing to make what has been a significant investment in managing the gorse on our property. It is encouraging to know that external support is provided, and we hope it can continue to be provided to complement our own private efforts.

We understand that we need to keep on top of the gorse management on our property through regular (annual) follow up attention to treat any regrowth as early as possible and would be grateful to be considered for future VGTF support if this was available".

Southwest Goulburn Landcare Network

Before

After

Thompsons Creek gorse control

Before

After

Commencing the 2022/23 Community Grants Program

This year we were amazed by the number of applications we received for our Community Grants Program.

We had a total of 19 applications with many applications coming in from private landholders. We are happy to see that landholders are talking amongst themselves and looking to get on top of their gorse. Stay tuned to find out who our successful applicants are.

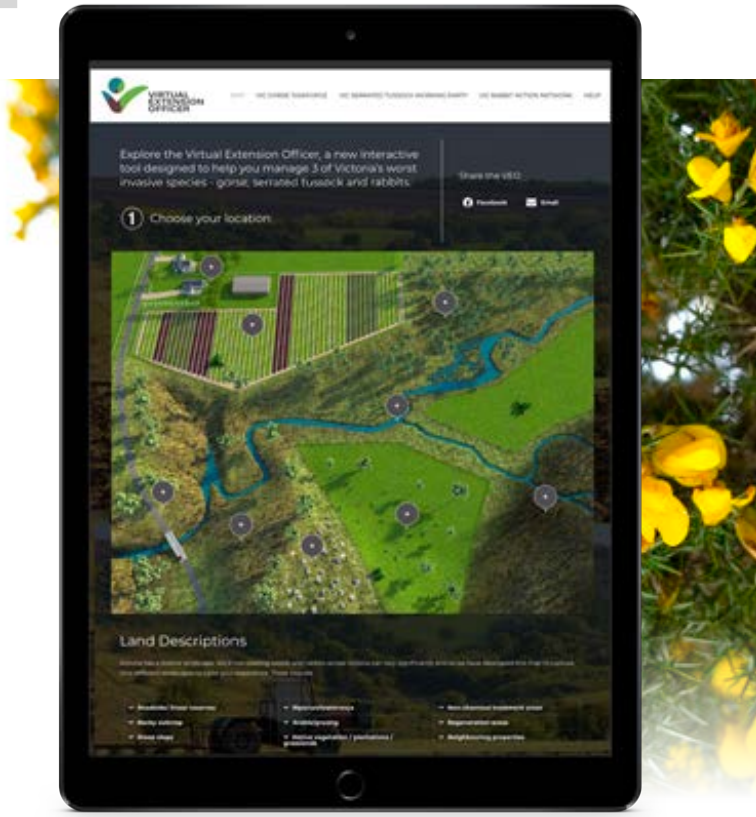
VGT story in Landcare Victoria's magazine

Don't miss the winter edition of the LVI magazine.

The winter edition features a VGT story about our new Virtual Extension Officer website. Happy reading!

GO TO LANDCARE VICTORIA MAGAZINE

Did you miss the launch of our new Virtual Extension Officer website?



The VEO is a free online resource for landholders effected by gorse, serrated tussock and rabbits.

The VEO was developed to enable landholders battling one of these species, to replicate their individual situation online and gather personalised information, in one location, without leaving their home. The VEO also interacts with the VGT, Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and Victorian Rabbit Action Network websites and is compatible with most smart devices.
Check it out and share it with your network and community.

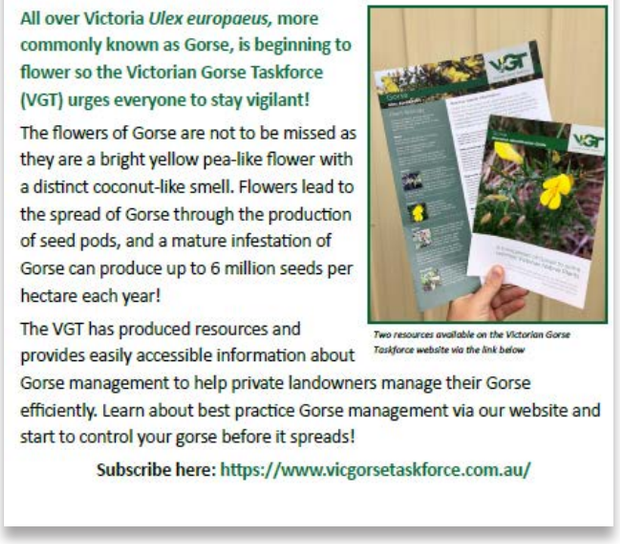
GO TO VIRTUAL EXTENSION OFFICER

Spotlight on gorse in winter

Depending on where you are in Victoria, you will most likely see gorse in flower.

If you're looking to control gorse this month, it is extremely important to start before seeding begins, so don't delay. More seed going into the ground means more years of control needed.

VISIT THE VGT FACEBOOK PAGE



All over Victoria *Ulex europaeus*, more commonly known as Gorse, is beginning to flower so the Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) urges everyone to stay vigilant!

The flowers of Gorse are not to be missed as they are a bright yellow pea-like flower with a distinct coconut-like smell. Flowers lead to the spread of Gorse through the production of seed pods, and a mature infestation of Gorse can produce up to 6 million seeds per hectare each year!

Two resources available on the Victorian Gorse Taskforce website via the link below

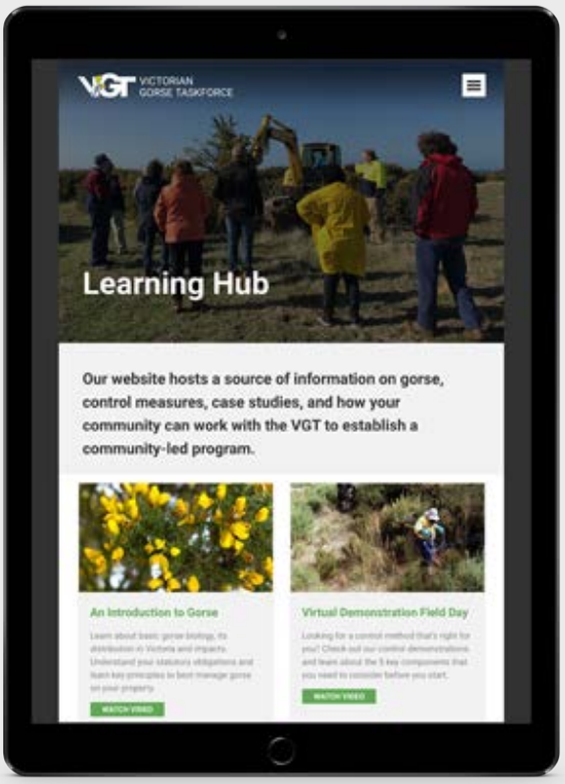
The VGT has produced resources and provides easily accessible information about Gorse management to help private landowners manage their Gorse efficiently. Learn about best practice Gorse management via our website and start to control your gorse before it spreads!

Subscribe here: https://www.vicgorsetaskforce.com.au/

The VGT Learning Hub

Looking for gorse information? The Learning Hub page on the VGT website is a great place to start.

We have some great videos on, gorse science, gorse impacts and control demonstrations. Plus, some great written resources and fact sheets to ensure you have all the information you need to tackle your gorse. We hope these resources assist you and your communities to effectively control gorse. **Check it out today and share it with your networks.**



GO TO VGT LEARNING HUB

Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party – Grants now available

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) are providing community groups and organisations with the opportunity to apply for grants to manage serrated tussock.

The grants aim to support community groups and organisations to build their capacity to achieve long term voluntary management of serrated tussock.

Serrated tussock plants along Picnic Road Hamilton

Grants of up to $5,000 (GST excluded) are available to deliver a project which meets the priorities and criteria outlined in these guidelines below. The grants promote collaboration between community groups, local Municipalities and the VSTWP in the best practice management of serrated tussock.

A key objective of the grants is to support community groups and organisations that have been actively controlling serrated tussock over a number of years.

Please see the guidelines and application form link below, which include how to submit the grant application, contact details and the criteria for assessment.

Grants are currently open for application:
http://serratedtussock.com/community-support/grants-and-assistance

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Get empowerment and confidence to tackle rabbits

The Victorian Rabbit Action Network (VRAN) help people, help the land by running courses and workshops on best practice rabbit management.

The aim of the VRAN education program is to ensure that every rabbit program delivered in Victoria is effective and sustainable.

VRAN Leadership in Rabbit Management course

In our two and a half day VRAN Leadership in Rabbit Management course, (aka VRAN Bootcamp) we'll teach you all about how to design and deliver an effective and sustainable rabbit program through:

- **Knowledge** - learn step by step integrated best practice rabbit management.

- **Real life examples** - case studies from our own VRAN mentor projects.
- **Community** - join our VRAN community and have access to VRAN mentors and peer support.

The Leadership in Rabbit Control Course includes both classroom and practical field-based training. By the end of the course participants will understand the ecology and biology of rabbits, Victoria's legislation framework and how to implement an integrated rabbit control program.

VRAN Mentor, Tim Bloomfield demonstrating how to use a smoke machine as part of best practice rabbit management.

We get our hands dirty and head outside to experience integrated rabbit control demonstrations and learn how to plan and implement monitoring courses to maximise the effectiveness of rabbit control. All participants will also attend an evening spotlight session.

We will also discuss things to consider when working in sensitive cultural heritage landscapes, the importance of collaboration, community engagement and chat about why rabbit work is challenging.

In addition to the classroom and field session you get to network with a group of people that are on a similar journey to you and facing similar scenarios and issues.

By participating in this course, you will enhance your existing contacts and pest management resources.

VRAN Mentors

The VRAN mentors facilitate the education programs and are recognised experts in rabbit management and community-led action. As a group, they provide expertise and insights from community, industry and government perspectives.

Each VRAN mentor has a few rabbit seasons under their belts and have experience in working across both private and public land and in different landscapes across the State.

We will challenge you to consider what you can do differently to help your community, your rabbit control course for the better.

Contact our VRAN Executive Officer, Heidi Kleinert heidi.kleinert@agriculture.vic.gov.au to discuss the VRAN services and to be the first to know about the next course intake!

Victorian Blackberry Taskforce – Murrindindi information day

- **Date:** Saturday, 23 July 2022
- **Time:** 11am for the presentation, followed by a light lunch
- **Place:** Murrindindi Community Hub, 815 Murrindindi Road, Murrindindi

The Yea River Catchment Landcare group in association with the Murrindindi Community Hub is hosting members of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce who will:

- Provide some background about the introduction and spread of blackberries in Australia, and
- Discuss suggested control measures, what other groups are doing to attack the problem, safe spraying and the use of drones.

YRCL will also have information about the group's spray trailer available for members to hire.

Access to the Murrindindi, Yea and other local rivers is being progressively choked by this noxious weed. Landcare members and local residents are encouraged to attend to learn effective strategies to help get this pest under control.

- **RSVP (for catering) by 15 July:** dindihub@gmail.com
  The event is free of charge

DELWP urges communities

to consider Good Neighbour Program

The Good Neighbour Program has been working hard this year to control invasive species at more than 200 project sites across Victoria.

These projects are joint efforts between landholders, community groups and government agencies to provide long-term management of weeds and pest animals along public/private land boundaries.

For more information about this program please contact your nearest DELWP or Parks Victoria office, email customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au or call the DELWP service centre on 136 186.

This program benefits native plants and wildlife which are threatened by invasive species, as they can destroy habitats and ecosystems.

Click here to watch **how the GNP could help your community.**

Landholder M. Greene overlooking treated Blackberry infestation on Hickman's Creek.

DELWP staff treating isolated woody weed species in the upper Wimmera Catchment.

Find out more about invasive species at:
https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/invasive-plants-and-animals/invasive-species-on-public-land

Follow VGT on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date:

www.facebook.com/VictorianGorseTaskforce

www.instagram.com/victorian_gorse_taskforce/

Contact the VGT

Email: info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

For more information

Visit the Victorian Gorse Taskforce website or contact Agriculture Victoria's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

www.vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

Contribute to Gorse Talk

Send your Gorse Talk contribution to **info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au**

Victorian Gorse Taskforce

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