

Get to know...

Regional Priority Weeds

Regional Priority Weeds are species which pose a significant risk to the environment, economy and/or human health and have a **high feasibility of coordinated control at the regional scale**. They are not yet present within the region, or only present in small amounts, but established elsewhere in the state and therefore not legislated at a state level. *Note that in this context, "region" refers to the Local Land Services (LLS) region.*

Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) falls within the South East LLS region which identifies 26 species as priority weeds in the South East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan ("the Regional plan"). Of these, **seven are already present on the Monaro or capable of establishing here**. The plan also outlines the **minimum level of control** required to meet the Biosecurity Duty under the Biosecurity Act (2015).

Where the goal is **eradication**, land managers should mitigate the risk of the plant being introduced to their land, eradicate the plant from the land and keep the land free of the plant, not deal with the plant (eg buy, sell, move), and notify the local control authority (Council) if found.

For species identified for **containment**, land managers must reduce the impact of the plant on assets of high economic, environmental and/or social value, and mitigate spread of the plant from their land.

If you suspect you've seen any of these species, please notify Councils Biosecurity Officers on 1300 345 345 or via council@snowymonaro.nsw.gov.au

Water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*)

Eradication

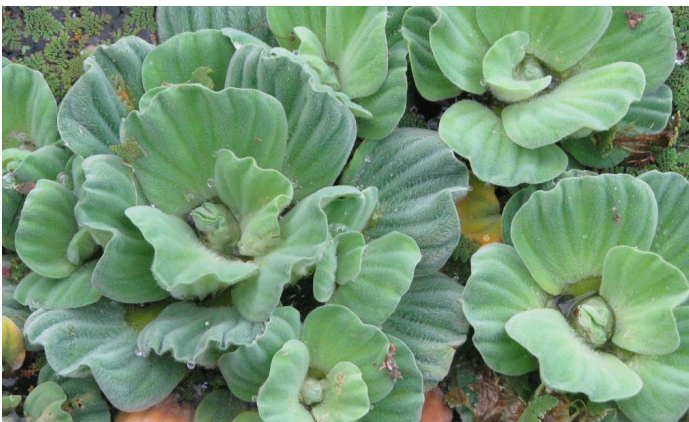
Water lettuce is a free-floating, fast growing aquatic plant which forms dense mats of connected plants. These can block irrigation equipment, prevent water activities and pose a risk to children or livestock if they become entangled in the root system. Water lettuce also provides habitat for mosquitoes and can severely reduce water quality.

Where is it found?

There are no known infestations in the region though occasional isolated instances have been recorded in the past where it has been offered for sale online in contravention of the Regional Plan.

How does it spread?

Water lettuce spreads by seed and stolons which produce daughter plants. It has previously been sold in nurseries as a pond or aquarium plant and is sometimes sold online. Note that it may be sold as dwarf water lettuce - this is a different form of the same species. In addition to deliberate movement, seed or plant parts may be spread by boats and fishing equipment which have not been properly cleaned.



Above: Water lettuce comes in two forms - standard (left) and dwarf (right).

24/7 Customer service line

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Sticky nightshade (*Solanum sisymbriifolium*)

Eradication

Sticky nightshade is an aggressive deep-rooted perennial which competes with crops, pastures, and native plants. It's sharp prickles can injure people, pets, livestock and native animals, and toxic compounds found in the stems, leaves, and unripe fruit can poison livestock.

Where is it found?

Sticky nightshade is mostly found in Western Sydney, Illawarra, and the Central Tablelands. Isolated plants have been found in the SE LLS region but these have been destroyed and not allowed to establish.

How does it spread?

Sticky nightshade can be spread by seed or root fragments. Seeds are spread via animal droppings, water, contaminated soil, and vehicles while root fragments are most likely to be spread in soil or on slashing or cultivation machinery. Sticky nightshade is common along roadsides in Western Sydney and parts of the Central Tablelands - vehicles travelling through these areas may pick up and transport seeds making roads, tracks and parking areas the most likely site of new infestations.



Above: Sticky nightshade leaves (left), flowers (middle) and fruit (right). Note the sharp prickles on stems and leaves.

Silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*)

Eradication

Silverleaf nightshade is a major weed of the wheat-sheep belt where it significantly reduces pasture growth and crop yields. It can be toxic to livestock and is very difficult to control, having a root system which can extend as far as 5 m deep.

Where is it found?

Silverleaf nightshade occurs extensively to the west of the dividing range. One infestation, thought to have been caused by contaminated fodder, is present in the Snowy Monaro LGA. This is under an eradication program.

How does it spread?

Silverleaf nightshade grows from seed which can be spread by birds, water, contaminated feed, or livestock. It also grows from root fragments which are most likely to be spread by cultivation machinery.



Above: Silverleaf nightshade stems and leaves (left) flower (middle) and fruit (right).

Horsetails (*Equisetum species*)

Eradication

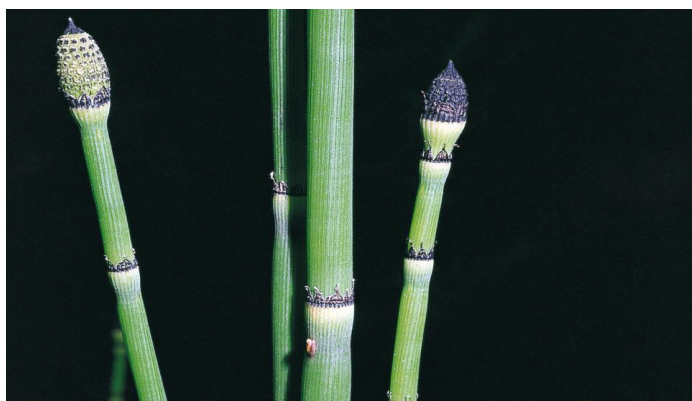
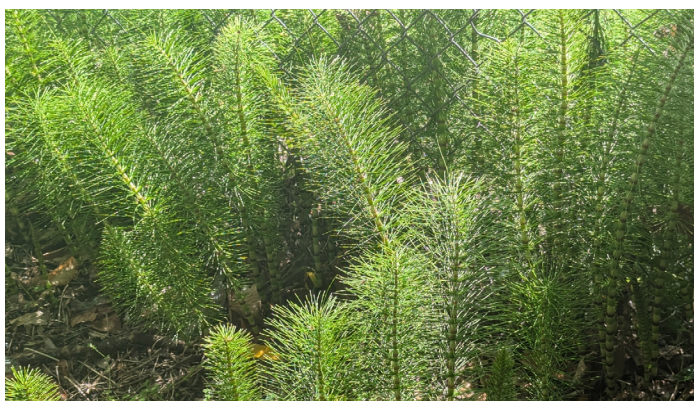
Horsetails are primitive, non-flowering plants which can be highly invasive. Of the 30 species found worldwide, 12 are invasive and all but one are toxic to livestock. Horsetails generally grow in damp or wet areas like the banks and edges of swamps, rivers and lakes where they form dense stands and produce substances that can inhibit the growth of other species.

Where are they found?

There are no known infestations in the region. A core infestation is present in one LGA in the Greater Sydney region. Occasional instances have occurred outside this area where they had been planted deliberately but these were subsequently destroyed.

How do they spread?

Horsetails can spread via spores however most spread is by rhizomes (thickened underground stems like in bamboo and irises). Horsetails have previously been sold and grown in Australia as ornamental and medicinal plants; spread is therefore most likely to occur due to the deliberate movement of plants however accidental spread may occur from fragments of rhizomes in garden waste.



Above: Horsetail infestation (left) and a close up of the stem tips (right).

Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)

Containment

Gorse is an invasive spiny shrub to 3m tall which produces masses of bright yellow flowers in late winter. It forms dense impenetrable thickets and can reduce pasture carrying capacity, block access, and provide shelter for pests. In National Parks and other environmental areas, gorse can compete with native vegetation and increase the risk of bushfires as it contains flammable oils and retains dead vegetation, increasing fuel loads.

Where is it found?

The main infestations of gorse in the Snowy Monaro LGA are found on waterways in the Carlaminda, Numeralla, and Dalgaty areas, with occasional smaller isolated patches found elsewhere.

How does it spread?

Gorse is spread by seed which mostly remains near the parent plant but can be spread by water movement, mud on vehicles, and animals. Seeds are long lived, capable of remaining viable for at least 30 years, with significant germination events occurring after fire or soil disturbance.



Above: Gorse plant in flower (left) and a closeup of a single stem (right) showing the sharp spines.

Coolatai grass (*Hyparrhenia hirta*)

Containment

Coolatai grass is an invasive drought, fire, and herbicide tolerant grass that readily invades weak pastures on light soils. In tablelands, it grows prolifically through the summer months and goes dormant over winter, leaving behind a tall thatch of highly flammable growth. Coolatai grass typically has low digestibility and protein levels, making it a poor pasture species. It is also one of the few perennial grasses capable of invading undisturbed natural ecosystems. Its larger height and bulk means its competitiveness and flammability can exceed that of African lovegrass.

Where is it found?

Four infestations have been detected on the Monaro Hwy between Cooma and Michelago with two sites remaining under an active eradication program. No plants have been found at the other two sites for several years. Other isolated infestations are present within the South East region, mostly along main roads and highways.

How does it spread?

Coolatai grass spreads by seed which may be transported by wind, water, animals or vehicles such as slashers.



Above: Coolatai grass tussock (left) seedheads (middle) and a closeup of the distinctive paired racemes (right).

Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*)

Containment

Spanish heath is a highly invasive shrub which is drought, fire and frost tolerant. A single plant can produce up to nine million tiny dust-like seeds each year. Resembling native tea-tree, Spanish heath is usually associated with disturbed habitats where it forms dense stands but it can also establish in undisturbed bush.

Where is it found?

Within the Snowy Monaro LGA Spanish heath has only been found in the Rockton area south of Bombala.

How does it spread?

Seeds are spread by wind and water, slashing equipment, movement of contaminated soil and on earth moving equipment or sticking to vehicles. Plants can also regrow from their hardy root system, even after fire or cutting stems off at ground level. Spanish heath has been sold as an ornamental in the past.



Above: A spanish heath infestation in bushland (left) and a close-up of the pink and white bell shaped flowers (right).