

Teacher Note

Problems caused by weeds in regard to the environment:

- 1) Competition for native flora in regard to water, nutrients and sunlight
- 2) Weeds make a fire hazard
- 3) Structural damage – to buildings, tracks and paths
- 4) Degradation of the natural environment
- 5) Weeds make homes for other introduced pests such as insects, diseases and vermin.

Weed control methods:

Mowing: Mowing the weeds is usually done before they set their seed, this is how the number of weeds is reduced or controlled. It is important to wash down the mowing equipment to avoid transporting seeds to another area.

Burning: Burning small weed infested areas can not only kill existing weed species but also their seeds. Burning too much can be damaging however, by burning up all the organic matter, which is usually broken down by the plants and taken up as nutrients.

Mulching: Mulches such as woodchip and straw, can be used to control weeds in smaller areas. The mulch blocks out the sunlight which is necessary for plant growth.

Chemical control: Chemical control is achieved through the use of herbicides, usually applied by means of spraying. The effectiveness of herbicides depends largely on the type of weed, its growth stage, and the chemical being used, soil and temperature conditions, equipment being used and the application rates of the herbicides being applied to the weeds.

Biological control: This method uses the particular weeds natural enemies or pests for control purposes.

Suggested Activities:

1. Identify herbicides used by your local shire. Are these environmentally friendly or damaging to the environment?
2. Identify weed species and the measure of control exercised in your local area.
3. Identify different types of mulches and how to obtain these.
4. Discuss permaculture techniques.

Outcomes:

Science – the environment, weeds and herbicides, control measures.