



A Fern Tree Bushcare Initiative

THE FERN TREE WEED BOOKLET

A Guide to Environmental Weeds of Fern Tree
on the slopes of kunanyi/Mt Wellington

3rd Edition



A PROGRAM OF



City of **HOBART**

WEEDS OF FERN TREE – A FERN TREE BUSHCARE INITIATIVE

On the eastern flank of kunanyi/Mt Wellington, Fern Tree is more strongly influenced by the mountain's climate than by the dry, coastal environment of greater Hobart.

This means that Fern Tree residents are surrounded by eucalypt forests with a midstorey of broad-leaved temperate rainforest vegetation, along with ferns and mosses. The wet environment also suits a distinct collection of weeds, making Fern Tree's weed issues unique to the area.

The Fern Tree Bushcare group is comprised of dedicated volunteers who are committed to reducing the impact of weeds on the natural environment. The group focuses on many weeds, including Spanish heath, broom, cotoneaster and karamu, but the main offender is holly. Over the past few years, Fern Tree volunteers have cut and painted over 250,000 holly stems.

This booklet by the Fern Tree Bushcare group, is a residents' guide to the local weeds, with a focus on the most aggressive invaders in and around Fern Tree.

If you have problem weeds on your property, Fern Tree Bushcare volunteers may be able to help you. Contact them via email at bushcare@ferntree.tas.au

A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT WEEDS

Environmental weeds are non-local plants that invade and change our landscapes and threaten the survival of native plants and animals.

Weeds can come from all over the world. Most environmental weeds in Australia are escaped garden plants – but they can also be Australian native plants outside their natural range, such as grevilleas.

In Fern Tree, some of the worst weeds are spread from gardens by berry-eating birds. The seeds of weeds like holly can travel long distances, well into the more remote parts of Wellington Park. Weeds can also creep out of gardens and be spread by wind or dumped garden waste.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WE DON'T DO ANYTHING?

If weeds are left to spread, the unique nature, diversity and habitat of Fern Tree and Wellington Park will be compromised. Weeds are ferocious competitors – they can take over huge areas of natural bushland, hindering the growth of natives and changing the shape and ecology of waterways. The longer we ignore weeds, the further they spread.

A FEW TIPS FROM FERN TREE BUSHCARE

Bushcare volunteers have been looking after our local bushland since 1996. Weed control is a long-term job – doing it once isn't enough! Our success only comes from a commitment to follow-up. We return to old sites every few years to remove any new weed seedlings, which if left, will repeat the same offence.

Another important aspect to weed control is that if there is a large infestation it should be removed gradually, especially in areas that may be prone to erosion, such as creeks. Weeds can become important habitat for native animals or may be hiding important cultural heritage values. A gradual approach allows native species to adapt to the change and ensures that large areas of bare earth are not exposed for more weeds to colonise.

Working from good bush towards bad is the most strategic way to undertake successful weed control. Start on the fringes of a weedy patch. This method is always the easiest way to encourage natural native regeneration – by far the most superior way to restore native bush is to allow it to naturally regenerate and if there is a good seed source nearby, your prospects are very good indeed.

Remember, every bit of weed control you take on is a bonus for protecting the native biodiversity of Fern Tree, so give yourself a pat on the back!

RECOMMENDED WEED CONTROL METHODS

Hand pull or dig-out

Hand pulling is a relatively low-impact control method for seedlings, herbs and grasses. Some larger plants with shallow root systems, such as boneseed, may also be pulled out quite easily. It is easier to remove all the roots from moist soil.

Dig out plants with tougher root systems by inserting a long knife or narrow trowel into the soil outside the root system. Gently loosen the soil, work around the roots and then work the plant out gently.

Plants without seed that will not resprout from cuttings can be left on-site to rot. Otherwise bag weeds, take them to the tip and remember to cover your load.

Mechanical removal

This is almost never a solution in itself, but mechanical removal can reduce the volume you need to treat, and may provide easier access.

Consider chainsaws, brushcutters, or slashers, but be sure to minimise soil disturbance and clean machinery well after treating an area. Always consider native plants and animal habitat, and seek advice first.

Cut and paint

The cut and paint method is the best technique for large or woody weeds. Get professional advice first, and always follow herbicide instructions carefully. Cut all stems as close to the ground as possible. A horizontal cut prevents runoff of poison. Apply herbicide to the cut stems immediately (within 15 seconds). For creepers, climbers and some other woody plants it is possible to scrape the woody stem and paint with herbicide.

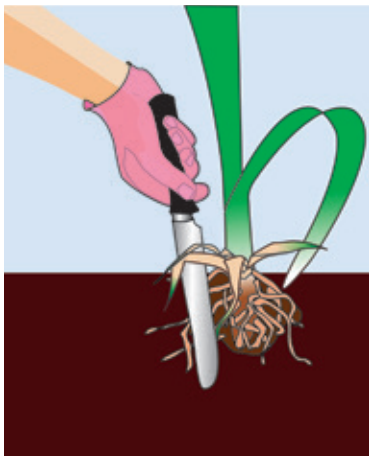
Hand pull

Hold at the base of the plant.



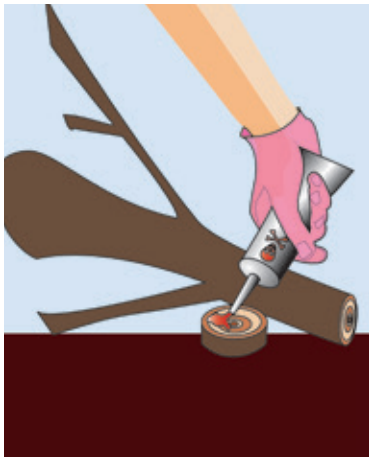
Dig out

Make sure you get all the roots.



Cut and paint

Take all safety precautions and wear protective clothing.



Chemical spraying

Get professional advice and follow herbicide instructions carefully. Note that by law, herbicide control may only be undertaken using chemicals registered for specific weeds and situations. If spraying near waterways, check that the appropriate chemical is used. The Fern Tree Bushcare group prefers not to use chemical sprays unless absolutely necessary.

Drill and fill

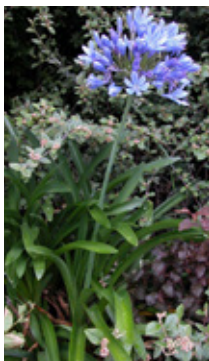
This method is useful for larger plants with a central trunk, where dead material can be left standing. Contact City of Hobart's Bushcare office on 03 6238 2884 or the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) on 1300 368 550 for more advice.

Follow up

Follow up is essential until the seed bank is exhausted (an average of seven years). For some species, such as gorse, this may even be in excess of 25 years.

Safety first!

Always wear protective clothing – long pants and sleeves, boots, gloves, mask, and eye protection – especially when handling toxic weeds or using chemicals. Get professional advice before using chemicals, and always follow label directions.



Agapanthus

Agapanthus praecox

Description

A hardy lily with thick, glossy, strap-like leaves to 50 cm long. Flowers are white, or blue to purple, in umbels on long erect stems.

Dispersal

Spreads locally by rhizomes, also by seed and fragments in water. A popular garden plant, often spread in garden waste.

Control

Remove flower heads before they set seed. Dig clumps out thoroughly, searching for root system. Collect root fragments and seal in a bag for disposal in rubbish, or remove all soil and leave in sun to dry out completely.



Blackberry

DECLARED WEED*

Rubus fruticosus complex

Description

Semi-deciduous woody shrub producing long arching thorny canes, prickly leaves divided into 3-5 leaflets, and white to pink rose-like flowers from November to March. Berries ripen from green to black.

Dispersal

Berries are spread by birds and animals. Stem tips can also root. Shoots vigorously from its crown, roots and root fragments.

Control

Blackberry can provide important habitat for native animals, so staged removal is recommended. Dig out small infestations, or cut and paint individual plants. Reduce mass of large infestations by brush-cutting. Follow up by grubbing out roots, or spray new growth. Do not spray during the fruiting stage.

CAUTION – IT IS ILLEGAL TO SPRAY FRUITING PLANTS

Note: Plants can provide wildlife shelter – remove gradually.



Blue periwinkle

Vinca major

Description

Perennial creeper with shiny dark green oval leaves forming low dense mats that smother all other ground flora. Flat, mauve, five petalled flowers to 5 cm, appearing in spring/summer. The extensive root system develops woody crowns.

Dispersal

Stem tips and nodes will take root. Little or no seed reproduction occurs. Dumped garden waste will root readily in contact with the ground.

Control

Heavy mulching, or solarisation (heating with sunlight) under black plastic may suppress and weaken plants to allow digging out. Alternatively, cut-back and spray the regrowth. Repeat spraying may be necessary. Do not leave cut material on the ground as it might re-root.



Californian thistle

(aka perennial thistle, creeping thistle)

Cirsium arvense

Description

Florets are coloured rose-purple to lavender. Leaves are a lighter green, compared to spear thistle. This weed has been found in some cleared areas in the Fern Tree area.

Dispersal

Reproduces vegetatively from the root system, also from root fragments in soil transported on machinery, etc. Seed is wind-blown.

Control

Cut off seed heads, seal in a bag and dispose in a rubbish bin. DO NOT attempt to control by digging out, as any remaining root fragments will form new plants. Chemical spraying is the most effective way to control Californian thistle and may have to be done several times.





Cherry laurel

Prunus laurocerasus

Description

Tough multi-stemmed evergreen commonly grown as a hedge, but if left unclipped can reach 15 m. Shiny bright green leathery leaves to 15 cm with distinct yellowish veins. Upright terminal sprays of strongly scented small white flowers in late spring. Cherry-sized red berries that ripen to black in autumn.

Dispersal

Berries are spread by birds and animals.

Control

Hand pull seedlings. Cut and paint or drill and fill large plants. Search for, and cut and paint any layers or suckers.

Note: Berries, leaves and bark are all poisonous.



Cotoneaster

Cotoneaster franchetii, *pannosus*, *glaucophyllus* or *simonsii*

Description

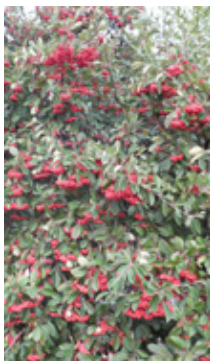
Semi-evergreen shrub to 3 m (*C. franchetii*) 2 m (*C. pannosus*). Leaf veins conspicuous (*C. franchetii*); inconspicuous (*C. pannosus*). Petals white to pinkish, erect (*C. franchetii*); petals white, spreading (*C. pannosus*). Berries bright red to orange red (*C. franchetii*); berries dull red (*C. pannosus*).

Dispersal

Prolific bearers of small red berries in autumn and winter. These are spread by birds and animals. Will layer, and can resprout from disturbed roots.

Control

Hand pull seedlings. Cut and paint or drill and fill large plants. Search for, and cut and paint any layers or suckers.



Daphne laurel

(aka spurge laurel)

Daphne laureola

Description

Evergreen shrub growing to around 1 m with long glossy leaves. Flowers small greenish-yellow, in clusters at base of leaves. Fruit are small black berries. When scraped plants have an unpleasant smell.

Dispersal

So far the only known occurrence of this weed in Australia is in the Grays Rd/Clegg Rd area of Fern Tree, but a careful lookout elsewhere should be kept. Plants spread locally by layering, and berries are dispersed by birds.

Control

Hand pull seedlings and small plants. Cut and paint larger plants. Collect any fruit, seal in a bag and dispose in a rubbish bin.

Note: All parts of the plant are toxic and may cause irritation to skin. Wear gloves.



Darwin's barberry

DECLARED WEED*

Berberis darwinii

Description

Evergreen shrub to 3 m. Small, dark green glossy leaves with holly-like tooting. Branches with clusters of needle-sharp spines. Hanging clusters of orange flowers in late winter and spring, followed by purple-black berries in autumn.

Dispersal

Berries are spread by birds and animals.

Control

Hand pull seedlings. Cut and paint larger plants.



* UNDER THE WEED MANAGEMENT ACT 1999



Elderberry

Sambucus nigra

Description

Small tree to 5 m with grey bark that furrows when mature. Leaflets are oval in shape, arranged in opposite pairs. Clusters of cream florets cover trees in spring, followed by black berries in autumn.

Dispersal

Berries are spread by birds. Can reproduce vegetatively via suckering.

Control

Hand pull seedlings, plants are shallow rooted so larger plants can also be hand pulled. Cut and paint plants too large to hand pull.



Elisha's tears

DECLARED WEED*

(aka Himalayan honeysuckle)

Leycesteria formosa

Description

Hollow-stemmed deciduous shrub to 4 m. Large heart-shaped leaves with a slender point. White drooping tubular flowers November–February in lantern-like spikes partly concealed by deep reddish-purple bracts at the base of the flowers. 10 mm purplish-black fleshy berries in autumn.

Dispersal

Berries spread by birds, water and dumped waste. Plant fragments can resprout if left in contact with moist soil.

Control

Hand pull, or dig out small plants. Cut and paint large plants. Do not leave cut material on the ground as it can re-root. Dense infestations can be sprayed.

English broom

DECLARED WEED*

Cytisus scoparius

Description

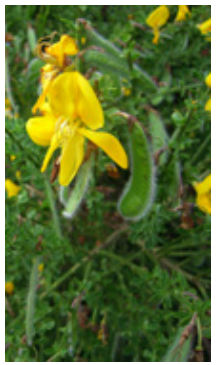
Deciduous, erect shrub to 2 m. Twiggy five-angled stems that are leafless for most of the year. Small dark green leaves in groups of three produced in spring. Masses of bright yellow pea-shaped flowers spring/summer. Brown or black hairy seed pods are produced in summer.

Dispersal

Seeds are spread by exploding seed pods, ants and water. Grows prolifically after fire from soil borne seed. Seed may remain viable in the soil for several years.

Control

Hand pull seedlings. Cut and paint larger plants. Follow-up is essential, monitor the cleared site for new seedlings.



English ivy

Hedera helix

Description

Evergreen climbing vine to 20 m. Woody fibrous branching stems. Glossy dark green leathery leaves losing their distinctive lobes when unsupported. Small greenish flowers in terminal umbels March–July appearing only when the plant has grown above its support. Small, blue-black berries in spherical heads in summer.

Dispersal

Seeds spread by birds and resprouting plant fragments in dumped garden waste.

Control

Hand pull seedlings and small plants. Cut and paint larger plants wherever they have rooted. Ivy does not need to be removed from bark, instead cut and paint at the base and allow the tops of the plant to die in the trees. Do not leave cut material on the ground as it can re-root.



* UNDER THE WEED MANAGEMENT ACT 1999



Foxglove

Digitalis purpurea

Description

Biennial or perennial plant to 2 m. Succulent erect downy stems. Hairy leaves to 30 cm in a basal rosette. Bell-shaped pink, mauve, yellow or white flowers, spotted inside, in erect spikes.

Dispersal

Each flower produces prolific, tiny seeds that spread in wind, water and soil.

Control

Hand pull plants before seed set. Spray dense infestations. Cutting or slashing dense infestations in the late bud or early flower stage can reduce seed production. Monitor a wide area around original infestation for new plants and control early.

Note: all parts of the plant are poisonous. Always wear gloves.



Fuchsia

Fuchsia magellanica

Description

Dense, sprawling, multi-stemmed shrub with pinkish stems and narrow, slightly toothed leaves. Flowers are deep red or pink, drooping and lantern-shaped, producing a pale or translucent fruit in summer/autumn.

Dispersal

Fruit is spread by birds and animals. Can reproduce vegetatively from stem fragments. Fuchsia has been found naturalised in the bush around Fern Tree.

Control

Hand pull or dig out small plants. Cut and paint larger plants. Do not leave cut material on the ground as it can re-root.

Gorse

DECLARED WEED*

Ulex europaeus

Description

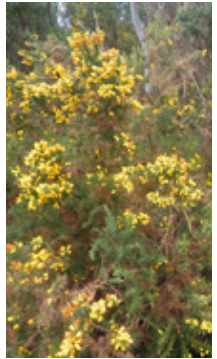
Prickly, fast growing evergreen shrub. Spiny, narrow grey-green hairy leaves on multi-branched, rough ribbed stems. Abundant deep golden-yellow clusters of pea flowers from July–October. Dark brown, oval-shaped hairy seed pods. Forms impenetrable thickets.

Dispersal

The long-lived seeds are forcefully ejected from exploding pods. Also spread by ants, water, soil and machinery. Seeds germinate readily after fire and may remain viable for decades.

Control

Gorse can provide important habitat for native animals, so staged removal is recommended. Cut and paint individual plants, foliar spray dense infestations. Long term follow up is necessary, monitor the cleared site for new seedlings.



Grevillea spp.

Description

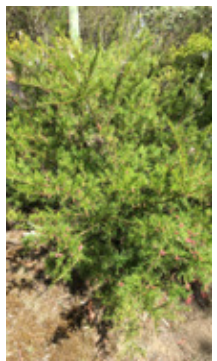
Variable, spreading shrub to 2 m. Leaves narrow-linear. Red or yellow flowers are petal-less, with long tube-like structures in clusters, often hidden in the foliage and produced at most times of the year.

Dispersal

Seeds spread by birds, animals and ants.

Control

Hand pull small seedlings, cut and paint larger plants.



* UNDER THE WEED MANAGEMENT ACT 1999



Hemlock

Conium maculatum

Description

Biennial herb to 1.5 m. Fern-like tripinnate leaves are deeply divided. Multi-branched stems are erect, hollow and marked with purple blotches. Masses of small white flowers in compound terminal umbels spring/summer. Damaged plants emit an unpleasant, mousey odour.

Dispersal

Seed is spread by water, wind, animals and slashing.

Control

Hand pull or dig out seedlings and small plants. Spray dense infestations.

Note: all plant parts are toxic to humans.



Holly

DECLARED WEED*

Ilex aquifolium

Description

Evergreen tree to 20 m. Stems bright green when young. Glossy dark green leaves with sharp triangular spines. Flowers develop over summer/autumn. Scarlet berries develop on female plants over autumn/winter.

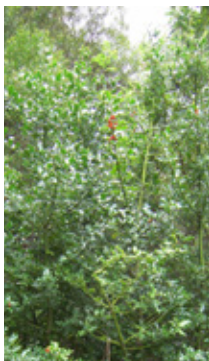
Dispersal

Female plants produce bright red seed-bearing berries in autumn. Birds and animals spread the seed into sensitive bushland. Holly also spreads by suckering and layering, and can form tall dense thickets that smother native vegetation.

Control

Target the berry-bearing female trees first. Berries should be sealed in a bag and disposed of in a rubbish bin. Cut and paint with herbicide, including small plants, as root fragments left in the ground can resprout. Do not leave cut material on the ground as it can re-root.

Note: The berries are toxic. Also, holly is highly flammable.



Karamu

DECLARED WEED*

Coprosma robusta

Description

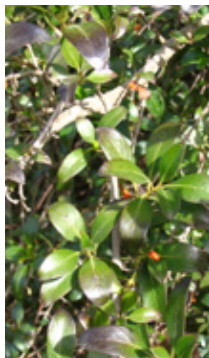
Large shrub or small tree to 6 m with stout hairless branches. Leathery dark matt green leaves, lighter beneath, in opposite pairs to 12 cm. Small greenish flower clusters, male or female, at the base of the leaves in spring/summer. Produces oval, orange or reddish fleshy fruit through summer to winter.

Dispersal

Berries are spread by birds and animals.

Control

Hand pull small seedlings. Cut and paint, or drill and fill larger plants. Monitor the cleared site for seed germination.



Mirror bush

Coprosma repens

Description

Shrub or small tree to 8 m. Glossy dark green roundish leaves. Separate male and female plants. Inconspicuous male flowers in dense greenish clusters. Tubular whitish female flowers in threes – summer. Fleshy orange berries produced in summer–autumn.

Dispersal

Berries are spread by birds and animals.

Control

Hand pull small seedlings. Cut and paint, or drill and fill larger plants. Monitor the cleared site for seed germination.





Montpellier broom (aka canary broom)

DECLARED WEED*

Genista monspessulana

Description

Dense upright shrub to 3 m. Oval leaflets in groups of three. Bright yellow pea-flowers produced in late winter–spring. Seeds produced in silky pods.

Dispersal

Seeds are spread by ants and water and germinate en masse after fire or soil disturbance. The density of seedlings prevents the germination of virtually all other plants. Seed can remain viable in the soil for several years.

Control

Hand pull small seedlings. Cut and paint, or drill and fill larger plants. Long term follow up is necessary, monitor the cleared site for new seedlings.



Orange hawkweed

DECLARED WEED*

Hieracium aurantiacum

Description

Bright orange daisy flowers with square-ended petals. Dark green leaves, paler underneath, forming rosettes close to the ground. Stems and leaves are covered in short, black stiff hairs.

Dispersal

Spreads by runners locally, forming a solid mat of rosettes that will exclude all other vegetation. Regrows each year from short, underground rhizomes. Seeds are readily spread by wind, and tend to grow in disturbed areas such as roadsides and drains.

Control

Report orange hawkweed to DPIPWE (telephone: 03 6165 3777, email: Biosecurity.Tasmania@dpiwwe.tas.gov.au) and seek advice. Areas should not be mown or slashed for at least two weeks after treatment.



Pittosporum species

Pittosporum tenuifolium, *P. undulatum*

Description

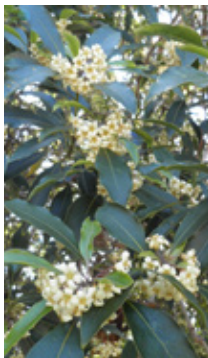
Sweet pittosporum (*P.undulatum*) from the Australian mainland is a shrub or small tree with shiny, oval leaves with wavy edges, lighter underneath. Flowers creamy-white and sweetly scented, followed by clusters of orange fleshy fruit. Sweet pittosporum can hybridise with native pittosporum. Kohuhu (*P.tenuifolium*) introduced from New Zealand, is a small tree valued as a garden plant for its variegated leaves.

Dispersal

Berries are spread by birds.

Control

Hand pull or dig out small plants. Cut and paint larger plants.



Radiata pine

Pinus radiata

Description

Aromatic pine tree with whorled branches to 50 m. Deeply furrowed dark brown bark. Shiny dark green needle-like leaves in groups of three. Large green female cones that turn brown with age. Seeds with a papery wing are released when cones open.

Dispersal

Seeds spread some distance on the wind, and are also carried into bushland by cockatoos.

Control

Hand pull small seedlings and small plants, cut and paint larger plants. Very large trees can be drilled and filled, however this approach can be extremely hazardous and should only be attempted by experts.





Red hot poker

Kniphofia uvaria

Description

Large, hardy lily with spikes of brightly coloured, red, orange or yellow flowers. Narrow leaves up to 90 cm, extensive underground rhizome. Grows in dense clumps.

Dispersal

Seeds spread readily in water, rapidly colonises creeks and drainage lines. Spreads locally by rhizomes.

Control

Dig out thoroughly, searching for bulbs and rhizomes. Remove flower heads before they set seed.



Rowan tree

Sorbus aucuparia

Description

Deciduous tree to 15 m with pinnate toothed leaves (11–15 leaflets) turning rich gold in autumn. White spring flowers in flattish clusters followed in late summer by pendulous clusters of bright red fruits.

Dispersal

Fruits are spread by birds.

Control

Hand pull small seedlings, cut and paint larger plants.



Spanish heath

DECLARED WEED *

Erica lusitanica

Description

Multi-stemmed woody shrub to 3 m with dense foliage of soft, fine leaves. Small white tubular flowers in winter/early spring. Capsules containing dust-like seeds produced in summer.

Dispersal

Prolific pepper-like seeds are spread by wind and water. Soil-stored seed remains viable for up to five years, and will germinate after fire. Burnt plants resprout from roots. Established plants will readily regrow if slashed. Will also layer and resprout from stems.

Control

Control before seed is produced. Hand pull seedlings, and cut and paint larger plants. Spray dense infestations, ensuring all plant parts are well covered with herbicide. Long term follow up is necessary, monitor the cleared site for new seedlings and sprayed plants for new growth.



Spear thistle

Cirsium vulgare

Description

Common roadside and agricultural weed with very spiny leaves up to about 1 m tall. Flowers are purple. Seeds have long hairs to aid distribution. Has been found naturalised in clearings in the Fern Tree bush.

Dispersal

Wind-blown or on tyres, clothing and animals.

Control

Control plants before seeds are produced. Hand pull or dig out plants, removing as much of the tap root as possible. Cutting or slashing dense infestations in the late bud or early flower stage can reduce seed production.





Sycamore

Acer pseudoplatanus

Description

Deciduous tree to 20–35 m with smooth grey bark. Large maple-like leaves, turning yellow/orange in autumn. Winged seed pods.

Dispersal

Seed pods have “wings” which are blown up to 50 m from parent tree by wind.

Control

Hand pull seedlings. Cut and paint or drill and fill larger plants.



Tree Lomatia

Lomatia fraseri

Description

Tall shrub or small tree up to 10 m high. Long (10 cm), toothed leaves, upper surface dark green, under surface yellow-green. Long dark grey seed follicles. Found increasingly in the Fern Tree bush.

Dispersal

Seeds spread by birds or animals.

Control

Hand pull seedlings. Cut and paint or drill and fill larger plants.





The **Fern Tree Bushcare group** meets on the second Sunday of the month (February–November) 10 am – 12.30 pm. Everyone is welcome.

To get involved with Bushcare, contact the City of Hobart's Program Officer Bushcare on 6238 2884, email bushcare@hobartcity.com.au or visit our website hobartcity.com.au/Bushcare



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