

You could almost think weeds have brains

BY MELANIE KEMBREY
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THEY know no boundaries.

They outgrow their competition, starve animals, conquer territory at speed and divide those against them.

Poison can be ineffective on their brute strength and some must be buried alive in plastic bags.

A Parramatta-based organisation has planted its foot down to eradicate the noxious species of plants that we know as weeds.

The Sydney Weeds Committee is creating a united front of government and non-government organisations to stop the spread of damaging weeds.

Committee president Jonathan Sanders said weeds are one of the biggest threats facing the Australian environment.

"Weeds don't really get the sort of attention they deserve. They aren't fashionable. They aren't as spectacular as other environment threats," he said.

"Their presence means the species and ecology we want to happen is not happening."

The organisation, based in Valentine Avenue, was formed a year ago. It aims to get as many of the organisations responsible for controlling weeds to work together.

One of the major weed concerns in the area is an aquatic weed, known as alligator weed, that grows in parts of the Parramatta River and some of its tributaries.

It can destroy aquatic life, stop animals from accessing the water and strangle native vegetation.

"If you use poison it won't always work. It's very very hard to kill. You have to dig the whole thing up and bury it in a plastic bag to kill it," Mr Sanders said.

Weeds start in small patches — most are escapees from backyards then animals, wind, water and people spread seeds.

"Weeds can spread through transport. The wheels of a four-wheel drive could transport some 20,000 weeds. That's a huge load of weeds," he said.

For the Sydney Weeds Committee it's a case of weed 'em and reap.



Weed 'em out: Sydney Weed Committee members Sally Williams and Rosanna Luca inspect a lantana infestation in Lake Parramatta Reserve.
Picture: Gene Ramirez