

WEEDS MAKE GREAT FOOD FOR ZOO ANIMALS



Penrith City Council and Western Sydney Zoo have recently begun an exciting and innovative project involving the collection of browse materials from both native plant and weed species to feed animals like elephants, giraffes, zebras and red pandas. Weeds such as African olive*, Willow, Chinese celtis and Bamboo are some of the target species that the zoo are after. Council is utilizing the zoo's involvement in some of their existing projects. For instance, normally a Willow would either be treated and left to stand as a dead skeleton which doesn't provide optimum aesthetics or chopped down untreated and taken to land fill where it cannot be chipped and used as it vegetatively regrows. So instead, council's bush regeneration staff have been chopping Willows down and the Zoo takes the material to feed to their animals. Similarly, Council's federally-funded project along River Road, over the next 3 years, will see contractors leaving selected species, that would normally be chipped and left to decompose on site, for the Zoo to collect for their animals. The Zoo doesn't waste any of the material collected for their animals. Foliage is given to animals like the zebra, giraffe and camel to enjoy and once they have consumed all the foliage leaving a bare trunk and branches it is then handed over to the Elephants whom apparently devour the entire trunk. Zoo staff come out to collect material from the Penrith 2-3 times a week. Contact Justine Vella from Penrith Council for more information.

Ku-ring-gai Council is also supporting the collection of weed material for use at Taronga Zoo. Specifically, Golden Bamboo *Phyllostachys aurea* is being collected from seven sites throughout Ku-ring-gai to help feed Pandas.



*Please note that the zoo has followed correct procedures and gained permissions from HRCC to harvest the African olive and remove from site.

