

PURPOSE

This policy identifies the responsibilities for all interested parties, provides recommendations to all parties regarding the issues of invasive and noxious plant species management and sets out the recommended AIH Inc actions.

The policy provides the basis of the AIH Inc principles regarding the management of invasive and noxious plant species. The policy provides a platform on which members may manage their horticultural practices pertaining to plant species that are identified as invasive or noxious plant species, or have the potential to become invasive plant species

BACKGROUND

As Horticulturists our day-to-day decisions relate to selection of plant species and lifestyle horticulture land management practices. Institute members, as professional horticulturists, have an obligation to adhere to the objectives stated in this policy statement. Those obligations may affect all levels of operation and management within the broad scope of the industry sectors. Horticulturists have a responsibility to be proactive in the implementation of the policy. As industry practitioners, members need to constantly update their knowledge as decisions can only be based upon available data and outcomes gained from sound research.

Worldwide, there is the problem of an introduced plant species becoming invasive because its new environment has been more than favourable to its lifecycle. Australia is no different. Through contaminated agricultural and horticultural crop seed lots; incorrectly identified imported known invasive plant species; 'greening' of our landscape by early government land planners, farmers and settlers; pretty flowering shrub garden escapes; and most importantly dumping of unwanted plants on public lands by lazy gardeners: has allowed many exotic or native imported plant species to be now evaluated as invasive.

Since the 1980's the state and federal governments have removed quarantine zones at borders and specific production zones, introduced more flexible import procedures and generally dispensed with regulatory requirements allowing self-regulation of agricultural and horticultural industry activities. The onus, to ensure non-importation of potential invasive plant species, had been placed very much on the shoulders of the 'nursery' industry – the supply chain. A return to a nationally endorsed process of quarantine and border or regional protection, that provides tight controls, will reduce the risk and safeguard this island continent from further invasive plant species.

At the same time the immigration to Australia of peoples from many nationalities and cultures has expanded bringing with them the expectations of their cultures. This included the foods, herbs and spices that form an integral part of their heritage and cultural lores, but more importantly, their dietary needs. Although many species were prohibited due to possible inoculation by disease many of the food species have been readily integrated into the Australian culture and dietary norms. In multicultural Australia invasive or noxious plant species are inextricably linked to economic plants as many species are cultivated for food, fibre, pharmaceutical and religious rites. There is now a reaction to declare many of these species as invasive, an outcome that could undermine many of Australia's multicultural lore.

Australia is party to international agreements which require a commitment to maintain either the species' cultural and heritage values and ensure preservation of the germplasm of a species which are currently vulnerable, threatened, endangered or extinct in their natural ecosystem. Species that have been exported around the world have found favourable growing conditions in their new environments. They may, or may not, be classified as invasive or noxious plant species, destructive insects or feral animals but due to their threatened status or extinction are reliant on the 'offshore' populations for continued survival.

AIH Inc supports a balanced view of:

- Evolutionary processes,
- Conservation of natural ecosystems,
- Economic needs of all Australians,
- Principles of inclusion and exclusion within cultural societies.

AIH Inc believes that all these factors should be encompassed to enable a pragmatic solution to invasive or noxious plant species.

In recent times non-horticultural interest group reports have in many cases placed the burden of responsibility for invasive species on the activities of the supply chain. Little or no input was sought from the horticulture industry nor its representative associations, nor was opportunity provided before publication to support or repudiate the content. The condemnation of the 'garden' industry and the media has been short sighted. Most reports base their comments and findings on a limited definition of the horticulture industry as that of the nursery sector. The horticulture industry has always encompassed a number of sectors whose vocational expertise is based upon the use and culture of plants either in the lifestyle horticulture setting or as cut flower, fruit and vegetable production. Although significant, the highest demand for plants is not from the home gardener but arises from the services sectors of the horticulture industry. (refer to 'Definitions – Industry').

Over the last few decades, with increased interest in themed and planned gardens, the gardeners interest in new, old, interesting, long flowering, easy to maintain, food source species and low water tolerant plant species has required all practitioners within all horticulture industry sectors to keep abreast of these demands. Increased popular culture programs via the media have provided the viewer with images of the many available plant species. A proportion of fashionable varieties of plants may elsewhere be recognised as an invasive species, or may have the potential to become invasive.

The horticulturist must have the background knowledge to provide advice or source advice regarding the management of invasive or noxious plant species currently in the landscape or the impact of any plant species, or recently introduced plant species, within the garden or natural environment. Again decisions can be based upon available current data and outcomes gained from sound research

The variations between geographical, climatic, and cultural needs are of critical importance when advising species selection. Many natives of specific climatic zones have markets across Australia and New Zealand and many cases have arisen where the introduced native species has adapted too well to the

new environment and are now classified as an invasive plant species. Therefore horticulturists are required to appropriately manage existing known invasive or noxious plant species. When selecting and using, managing or excluding plants within an environment, all parties involved must place more emphasis upon the major regional differences within Australia. Contexts for evaluation as an invasive plant species should be made on a regional basis, recognising the geographical, climatic, cultural and societal variations. To enable this evaluation there must be the use of one Australian standard assessment process based upon sound repeatable scientific data analysis.

AIH Inc support the inclusion of plants at taxon level (not limited to genus or species) under the terms of the Federal, State or Local declared, restricted and 'Weeds of Significance- WONS' classifications and other relevant classifications that are based upon sound scientific data. These plants may exhibit poisonous properties to humans and animals, cause irritation or illness or other deleterious side effects, contaminate crops or affect all regions of Australia. Exclusion of all other plants can only be supported if based upon regional lists developed through the use of one Australian standard assessment process.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Weed species** - A plant growing out of place.
2. **Invasive plant species** - Any undesired, uncultivated plant species that grows in profusion so as to crowd out a desired plant, native vegetation community or crop that is not readily managed by natural predator/s.
3. **Noxious Plant** - A plant species that may or may not grow into invasive proportion but is poisonous, irritant (skin or digestive), tainting animal products
4. **Heritage plant** - A species that is significant because of its cultural significance or inheritance either as a food source, aesthetic value or cultural or religious use. Pertains to Indigenous, Anglo-Celtic, Asian, Eurasian, Pacific Rim or other races of people who have settled in Australia.
5. **Horticultural Industry**
 - Horticultural consultants,
 - Landscape architects/ designers/ contractors,
 - Gardeners and maintenance gardeners,
 - Interior plantscapers,
 - Turf producers,
 - Irrigators,
 - Parks, sports fields and open space managers,
 - Tourist resort and special themed leisure facility gardeners, zoological gardeners,
 - Permaculture practitioners, organic food producers, small crop farmers,
 - Cut flower and bulb producers,

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- Natural resource community program groups,
 - Specialist plant collectors,
 - Nursery – production, propagation and retail,
 - Horticulture media
6. **Client** - Any person or body, private or government with which a horticulturist operates.
7. **Recognised Invasive and Noxious Plants Risk Assessment Procedure** - A nationally recognised and implemented assessment and evaluation process encompassing established horticultural species and those intended for import for use as an ornamental horticultural species that considers:
- Geographical, climatic, cultural and societal variations
 - With a balanced view of evolution, conservation, economic needs, inclusion and exclusion
 - Based upon repeatable sound research and data
 - The **International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)** - a [multilateral treaty](#) overseen by the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) that aims to secure coordinated, effective action to prevent and to control the introduction and spread of [pests](#) of plants and plant products. The Convention extends beyond the protection of cultivated plants to the protection of natural flora and plant products. It also takes into consideration both direct and indirect damage by pests, so it includes weeds.
 - Application of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** - <https://www.cites.org/eng/disc/what.php> ensures that international trade does not threaten species with extinction, protecting about 5,000 species of animals and 30,000 species of plants.
8. **Alternatives** - An alternative recommended species for an invasive or noxious plants species.
9. **Plant label** - National standard of attached label bearing the plants Botanical name, geographical/climatic considerations, potential to become invasive and its severity of impact.
10. **Invasive or Noxious Plant Species list**- A recognised list of plants the species that may exhibit poisonous properties to humans and animals, cause irritation or illness or other deleterious side effects, contaminate crops or affect regions of Australia
11. **Certification and recognition schemes** - The [AIH Registered Horticulturist scheme](#) enables industry expertise recognition which sets a minimum standard and contains set criteria for which practitioners are required to meet or surpass and requires a personal Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program
12. **WONS - 'Weeds or noxious plant species of National Significance'** – a list of invasive or noxious plant species that are recognised as national weed problems
13. **Government agencies** - All government bodies at national, state and local level

14. **Horticulture Innovation Australia** <http://horticulture.com.au/about/> is a national research, development and marketing organisation for the horticulture industry. Includes programs, news and events, statistics, and reports.
15. **Other Interested Parties** - Botanic gardens, The National Heritage Trust, education institutions, conservation, environment and land management groups, industry and professional organisations, non-government organisation research groups, community groups and the public.
16. **Production Horticulture** - The production of fruit and vegetable crops, cut flower production either in ground or protected environments
17. **DAFF Weed Risk Assessment (WRA) system**
http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/weeds/system/weed_risk_assessment

The WRA system is a question-based assessment of the weed potential of plants proposed for import. Assessment involves answering up to 49 questions on specific characteristics of a plant. The answers generate a numerical score relating to the weed potential of that plant. The score is used to determine an outcome: accept the species for importation; reject the species for importation; or reject pending further evaluation of the species' weed potential.
18. **National Weeds Management Facilitator** undertakes a range of national weed actions, including providing advice and assistance on the implementation of the Australian Weeds Strategy at the national level. The position of 'Facilitator' to be funded by the Australian Government.

THE INSTITUTE CONSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

- To promote the exchange of Horticultural knowledge, and to co-operate with governments, scientific or other societies or bodies, or persons in any part of the world who may be working to achieve any objects of the Institute.
- To assist and promote Horticultural education in every way possible.
- To promote and encourage in every way possible the protection and preservation of the flora indigenous to Australia.
- To promote Horticulture as a means of environmental improvement.
- To promote legislation having for its objects the advancement or protection of Horticulture.
- To assist in arranging for the selection, breeding, and testing of any or all classes of plants.
- To promote fair marketing practices of Horticultural products, and to promote and assist in the standardisation and health control of marketable plants.
- The Institute recognises that horticulture plays an important and integral part of sport, recreation and pleasure activities and provides a sense of fulfilment and well-being

THE INSTITUTE MEMBERS AIH members are required by its Code of Ethics to manage invasive or noxious plant species and to update their knowledge through continuing professional development to enable more effective species identification, evaluate the potential for plant species to become invasive and implement control measures.

The following two Codes demonstrate their commitment:

- Maintain professional competence by keeping abreast of new information and developments
- Recognise responsibility to the community and the environment in protecting each from exposure to actual or potential hazard

- A. **THE INSTITUTE**
- B. **THE INSTITUTE MEMBERS AND HORTICULTURISTS,**
- C. **GOVERNMENT AGENCIES,**
- D. **INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTIES**
- E. **AIH Inc Actions to Year 2023**

A. THE INSTITUTE

Consultation and Communication

- Lobby **government authorities**, other interested parties **and industry groups**, with the intention of communication and consensus of the declaration of a plant as an invasive or noxious plant species or restriction of the use of the plant species,
- Consultation at all Federal, State and Local development and planning levels to provide informed advice as to the use of plant species or possible declaration of invasive and noxious plant species,
- Support other industry group invasive plant or noxious policies and guidelines which share similar ethos as AIH Policy and Guidelines,
- Provide direction to **Other Interested Parties** as to the evaluation, management and eradication of plant species declared invasive
- Provide input to plant label development to aid client choice of plant species; and
- Provide input into the development of a single Invasive or noxious plant species Assessment and Evaluation Scheme.

Education:

- Promote education opportunities to horticulturists to identify weed species and possible potential weed and invasive species,
- Aid public and client awareness of invasive plant species and declaration, disposal of plant material, safe control measures and other points of interest,
- Liaise with industry groups and other interested parties to increase the knowledge of sellers and resellers of plant species
- Include the management of plants to exclude invasive or noxious plant species, considering those listed in WONS, [National Environmental Alert List](#) and [National Weeds List](#) as part of all industry certification or recognition schemes; and
- Advise if excessive use of suggested alternative plant species will cause a new invasive plant issue.

Research

- Encourage the research of the biology of a plant, to enable informed judgements regarding the declaration of a plant species or the potential for a plant to become an invasive species; and
- Encourage the research of the methodology of regeneration programmes, which aid the maintenance of biodiversity and decrease possibility of mass post invasion after control measures have been implemented.

Conservation

- Provide support and advice to **Other Interested parties** regarding the management of an invasive or noxious plant species,
- Support the identification and research of 'heritage' plants to enable the management of cultural heritage species that may be considered an invasive species or problem plant,
- Endorse the need to manage the biodiversity of fauna and flora; and
- Enable informed decisions when involved in structured screening discussions.

Legislation

- Lobby for change at national and local levels where we know legislation to be ineffective,
- Communicate the relevant Legislation and Regulations, [National Environmental Alert List](#) and [National Weeds List](#) to members,
- Provide valuable input and actively involve the Institute in structured screening procedures with government authorities and industry; and
- Support the development and implementation of one standard National Weed Risk Assessment procedure for both established plants and intended imports based upon sound scientific data with reference to any current systems in place including the WRA procedure http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/weeds/system/weed_risk_assessment and one national portal

B. THE INSTITUTE MEMBERS AND HORTICULTURISTS

It is recommended that the following guidelines form a basis against which horticulturists will implement their horticultural practices pertaining to plant species that are invasive or noxious plant species or have the potential to become invasive. With the expansion of export markets we also have a responsibility to other countries when considering export of plants.

Consultation and Communication

- Plan with the 'client', evaluation and consultation regarding the possibility of the chosen species becoming invasive on the site,
- Lobby government authorities, industry groups and other interested parties with the intention of communication and consensus of the declaration of a plant as invasive or a weed species or restriction of the use of the plant species,
- Consult at both urban and/or regional development and planning levels to enable informed decisions as to the use of plant species or possible invasive and noxious species declaration; and
- Aid client awareness by ensuring plant label contains appropriate information on the plant species.

Education:

- Self education will enable horticulturists to identify possible potential invasive and noxious plant species by taking into consideration the history of the plant, its lifecycle, means of introduction, methods of control, its use as a crop or food source and its habit in other countries/regions,
- Aid public awareness of weed declaration, disposal of plant material, safe control measures and other points of interest,
- Lobby the public, industry, other interested parties and government authorities, to educate with informed knowledge of the subject matter,
- Liaise with industry groups and other interested parties through informed discussion, to increase the knowledge of sellers and resellers of plant species; and
- Ensure excessive use of suggested alternative plant species does not cause the development of a new invasive plant species; and
- AIH Inc endorse the use of the print media example industry magazines, print and electronic bulletins as tools for disseminating information.

Research

- Research the biology of a plant, to enable informed judgements regarding the declaration of a species or the potential for a plant to become an invasive species; and
- Research the methodology of regeneration programmes, which aid the maintenance of biodiversity and decrease possibility of mass post invasion after control measures have been implemented.

Conservation

- Provide support and advice to **other interested parties** regarding the management of an invasive or noxious plant species,
- Identify and research 'heritage' plants to enable the management of cultural heritage species that may be considered an invasive species or problem plant; and
- Consider the need to maintain biodiversity of fauna and flora and enable informed decisions when involved in structured screening discussions.

Legislation

- Become aware of, and comply with, relevant legislation and regulations, [National Environmental Alert List](#) and [National Weeds List](#)
- Supply valuable input through active involvement in structured screening procedures with government authorities and industry; and
- Support the development and implementation of one standard National Weed Risk Assessment procedure for both established plants and intended imports based upon sound scientific data with reference to any current systems in place including the WRA procedure http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/weeds/system/weed_risk_assessment and one national portal

C. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Consultation and Communication

- Recognise AIH Inc as the non-sectorial professional association which represents all horticulturists in Australia,
- Refer to AIH Inc for professional support and advice including invasive or noxious plant management projects,
- Consult with the industry for the evaluation and consultation regarding the possibility of the chosen species becoming invasive within a region or Australia wide,
- Through open communication to interested industry sectors seek consensus of the declaration of a plant as invasive or a noxious plant species or restriction of the use of the plant species,
- Consult at both urban and/or regional development and planning levels to enable informed decisions as to the use of plant species or possible invasive and noxious species declaration; and
- Continue to provide funding for the National Weeds Management Facilitator as the first point of contact to service all lifestyle and production horticulture industry sectors for information on the national weeds management strategy, including the provision of advice and assistance on the implementation of the Australian Weeds Strategy at the national level.

Education:

- Ensure compulsory education to the industry through the national training framework system for specific education which will enable horticulturists to identify possible potential invasive and noxious species by taking into consideration the history of the plant, its lifecycle, means of introduction, methods of control and its habit in other countries/regions,
- Primary provider of education and awareness programs to the public of invasive plant species, declaration, disposal of plant material, safe control measures and other points of interest,
- Support and liaise with all industry sectors and groups through informed discussion, to increase the knowledge of sellers and resellers of plant species; and
- Refer to AIH Inc for professional support and advice.

Research

- Increase opportunities and funding for research programs to:
- Support the development and implementation of one standard National Weed Risk Assessment procedure for both established plants and intended imports based upon sound scientific data with reference to any current systems in place including the WRA procedure http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/weeds/system/weed_risk_assessment and one national portal for declaration information,
- Study the biology of a plant, its management and its potential to become invasive,
- Research the methodology of regeneration programmes; and

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- To develop substitutes for a declared taxon with a benign taxon where practical. where the plant is used as traditional food sources by various cultural groups.

Conservation

- Provide support for the identification and research of 'heritage' plants to enable the management of cultural heritage species that may be considered an invasive species or problem plant,
- Include all interested industry parties during the consideration of biodiversity of fauna and flora to enable informed decisions
- Recognise regional variation of risk; and
- Refer to AIH Inc for professional support and advice including invasive and noxious plant species management projects.

Legislation

- Communicate the relevant Legislation and Regulations, [National Environmental Alert List](#) and [National Weeds List](#)
- Refer to AIH Inc for professional support and advice,
- Support a national nursery plant labelling guidelines where it is based upon invasive potential, geographical/climatic consideration and its severity of impact,
- Seek valuable input from interested industry parties through active involvement in structured screening procedures,
- Increase regulatory inspections of plants for sale to include registered nurseries, market stalls, the world wide web, landscape suppliers and allied industry,
- Implement stringent border or regional quarantine measures,
- Reinforce import/export quarantine measures and provide more robust, vigorous protocol at point of entry,
- Require all levels of government to apply the one preferred Risk assessment procedure
- Require industry to include the '*management of plants and landscapes to include the management of plants known to be invasive or with invasive potential and noxious plant species*' as part of any industry certification or recognition scheme

D. INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTIES

Consultation and Communication

- Plan with the industry, evaluation and consultation regarding the possibility of the chosen species becoming invasive on the site,
- Through open communication to interested industry sectors seek consensus regarding concern that a plant may become invasive or a weed species or need restriction as to the use of the plant species,
- Consult at both urban and/or regional development and planning levels to enable informed decisions as to the use of plant species or possible invasive and weed species declaration,
- Support the implementation of national plant labelling guidelines where it is based upon invasive potential, geographical/climatic considerations and its severity of impact; and
- Refer to AIH Inc for professional support and advice including invasive and noxious plant species management projects

Research

- Support research of the biology of a plant, to enable informed judgements regarding the declaration of an invasive and noxious plant species or the potential for a plant to become an invasive species; and
- Support research of the methodology of regeneration programmes, which aid the maintenance of biodiversity and decrease possibility of mass post invasion after control measures have been implemented.

Conservation

- Provide support and advice to **Other Interested Parties** regarding the management of an invasive plant or weed species,
- Support the identification and research of 'heritage' plants to enable the management of cultural heritage species that may be considered an invasive species or problem plant,
- Endorse the need to manage the biodiversity of fauna and flora; and
- Enable informed decisions when involved in structured screening discussions.

Legislation

- Become aware of, and comply with, relevant weed legislation and regulations, [National Environmental Alert List](#) and [National Weeds List](#)
- Supply valuable input through active involvement in structured screening procedures with government authorities and industry,
- Communicate the relevant legislation and regulations, [National Environmental Alert List](#) and [National Weeds List](#)

- Support the development and implementation of one standard National Weed Risk Assessment procedure for both established plants and intended imports based upon sound scientific data with reference to any current systems in place including the WRA procedure http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/weeds/system/weed_risk_assessment and one national portal
- Include the *'the management of plants known to be weedy or with weed potential in the management of plants and landscapes'* as part of any industry certification and recognition scheme

E. AIH Inc Actions to Year 2023

1. AIH Inc will continue to require members to implement horticultural management of plants with consideration to the balance of the geographical, climatic, cultural and societal variations within Australian regions
2. AIH Inc support the development and implementation of one standard National Weed Risk Assessment procedure for both established plants and intended imports based upon sound scientific data with reference to any current systems in place including the WRA procedure http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/weeds/system/weed_risk_assessment
3. AIH Inc support the establishment of a nationally adopted plant labelling guidelines system where it is based upon invasive potential, geographical/climatic consideration and its severity of impact,
4. AIH Inc will support all programs, based upon the noted criteria contained herein, that will ensure no new invasive plants become naturalised in Australia
5. AIH Inc will lobby for substantial increased funding for all parties, as noted in the policy, to manage existing invasive or noxious plant species
6. AIH Inc will lobby for an extensive research program into plant selection, use and management to ensure the reduction in the cost of control measures
7. AIH Inc, in partnership with all industry bodies, to ensure the horticulture industry has a national peak industry body through which the paradigm of sound management of plant species selection and use will be encapsulated
8. AIH Inc will support the National Weeds Management Facilitator as the first point of contact to service all lifestyle and production horticulture industry sectors for information on the national weeds management strategy, including the provision of advice and assistance on the implementation of the Australian Weeds Strategy at the national level.