

*****Warning *****Wheel Cactus*****

Don't let this happen to your property



Wheel Cactus (*Opuntia robusta*)

Wheel Cactus (a native of Mexico) we believe was planted in a garden near Maldon in the 1900s. Since then it has infiltrated pastures and parklands around Maldon, Baringhup and Nuggety and is rapidly spreading further afield. Some infestations are now so dense the land is inaccessible. Wheel Cactus has a significant negative impact on our local economy and environment, rendering farmland and property worthless, killing livestock, and displacing our native flora and fauna.

Different to Prickly Pear

Wheel cactus is not Prickly Pear (*Opuntia stricta*) but is often mistaken for this close plant cousin. They have different shaped lobes; Wheel Cactus having round disks while Prickly Pear has oval shaped lobes (pictured at right). These two cacti grow very differently in our local environment.



Legislation

Wheel Cactus was declared a **Noxious Weed** in Victoria in 1961 and a **Weed of National Significance** in 2012. Due to its status as a “Regionally Controlled Weed”, all property owners must take all reasonable steps to prevent the growth and spread of wheel cactus on their land.

Eradicating Wheel Cactus

Wheel Cactus is a very difficult plant to destroy, so please don't ignore them, instead **kill them before they mature and bear fruit**. The lobes have thick, waxy skin and don't absorb surface sprays, so the most effective control methods are by digging and burying the small plants, and injecting larger plants with herbicide. This cactus regenerates from any piece of lobe so it cannot be dug up and left lying on the ground. The mature plant has red fleshy fruit, each containing hundreds of seeds which are spread by birds and animals, and can survive for up to 20 years in the soil.

Tarrangower Cactus Control Group

Our goal is to eradicate Wheel Cactus from our local environment. We hold **Community Field Days** around the Maldon area on the **last Sunday of each month** (May-October) (check our website for locations) where we demonstrate how to kill the plants and offer support and technical advice. For information and help please contact us via our website www.cactuswarriors.org

How to Kill Wheel Cactus

Very Small Plants (less than 50mm)

- squash them under foot completely (until unrecognisable).

Small - Medium Plants

- dig them up and bury entire plant under half metre of soil, or burn on a very hot fire.
- or dispose of plant in your domestic rubbish bin or take to Maldon Tip for disposal (free)

Large Plants

- inject at least all outer wheels (lobes) with herbicide (450g/L Glyphosate diluted 1:3 in water)
(If only the inner lobes are treated, the outer lobes can fall off the plant and then regrow.)

Very Large Plants

- remove the fruit to prevent birds eating and spreading the seeds
- dispose of fruit in sealed rubbish bin or incinerate
- inject at least all outer and second outer wheels (lobes) with herbicide (as above)

How to Inject Wheel Cactus Plants

- Load backpack onto your back then prime and check the injector gun is working properly by pointing the needle towards the ground and squeezing the trigger
- Pierce the wheel cactus lobe from the edge of the wheel towards the middle of the lobe, pushing the needle well into the lobe (see picture below)
- Pull the needle back out half way to form an empty pocket of air in the middle of the lobe
- Squeeze the trigger so that 4 ml of herbicide (diluted glyphosate) is squirted into the empty pocket
(Beware: If you don't pull the needle back out of the lobe, there is nowhere for the liquid herbicide to go and it will squirt back out of the plant)
- Pull the needle out of that lobe
- Continue to do the same to **at least all first and second outer lobes** on the wheel cactus plant
- Mark a lobe with spray paint to show this plant has been injected (see below)



****It's important to first inject all fruiting plants to prevent the spread of seeds**

- **don't dig up a cactus plant and leave it lying on the ground, it will regrow**
- **don't break off part of a lobe and leave it lying on ground, it will regrow**

Caution

- Wear protective clothing, gloves, boots and glasses to protect against the cactus prickles and herbicide.
- Seek advice on how to correctly inject the cactus lobes; to prevent inhalation, ingestion or absorption of the herbicide.