
Weed Spotters Network Queensland



Bulletin July 2026

The Dirty Dozen: statewide targets for pre-emptive surveillance and early detection

Dear Thomas,

A range of pest plants and animals not currently naturalised in Queensland are major pests in other countries and States of Australia, where climate and habitat types are similar to ours. There is a high risk that these species will become major pests in Queensland if their entry and establishment are not prevented. Pre-emptively looking for these high-risk species increases the likelihood of detecting new populations while they are small and vulnerable to complete eradication. The continued global movement of high-impact pest plants and animals means that these species will keep on coming.

There are more than 900 high-risk plant species and thousands of high-risk mammal, reptile and amphibian species listed as 'prohibited biosecurity matter' in Queensland. All of these species are targets for exclusion, surveillance (early detection) and, when found, statewide eradication (if feasible). In addition, there are a small number of species listed as 'restricted biosecurity matter' in their early stages of invasion and, as such, are also targets for surveillance/detection and statewide eradication, which are listed as restricted (category 2). Weed Spotters training focusses on how to recognise a relatively small number of our listed species.

What makes a good target for early detection and eradication?

Potential impact: high-risk species have a proven track-record as a major pest overseas in similar climate and habitats. Most of our prohibited and restricted weeds are from the tropical, subtropical and arid zones in Asia, Africa and South & Central America with similar climates to Queensland, and have a documented history of weed impacts. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) maintains a list of the [world's worst invasive species](#). Weed Spotters will recognise many species on this list such as Miconia (*Miconia calvescens*), Mikania vine (*Mikania micrantha*) and Siam weed (*Chromolaena odorata*).

Likelihood of entry: high-risk species have a clear pathway of entry into Queensland. For a very small number, the entry pathway is accidental introduction or 'hitchhiking', such as tropical soda apple coming from infested areas of New South Wales, but for the majority the pathway is deliberate introduction of plants with ornamental, agricultural or cultural value.

Feasibility of early detection: good targets have attributes that make them more likely to be detected. This is often a combination of easily recognisable physical features that make it more likely to be noticed and distinguished from similar-looking plants in the area, and entry pathways that make it more likely to be detected before it spreads. Feasibility of early detection is also assessed based on the existence of surveillance networks including Weed Spotters.

Vulnerability to timely eradication: good targets have biological traits that make eradication more feasible, such as relatively few dispersal mechanisms, longer time to maturity (setting seed for the first time), and shorter seed lifespan. Vulnerability to timely eradication rapidly declines once a population has established over more than 10ha as the resources required for surveillance to detect and destroy every single propagule increase exponentially with search area.

The top 12 candidates have been nicknamed the *Dirty Dozen*, eight of which are plants:

1. Non-native Acacia/Vachellia/Senegalia species (particularly [Karoo Thorn](#))
2. [Equisetum spp.](#) (Horsetails)
3. [Kochia](#) / burning bush (*Kochia scoparia*, syn. *Bassia scoparia*)
4. [Cecropia spp.](#) (Mexican bean trees)
5. [Opuntia](#) and *Cylindropuntia*
6. [Red sesbania](#) (*Sesbania punicea*)
7. [Spiked pepper](#) (*Piper aduncum*)
8. [Tropical soda apple](#) (*Solanum viarum*)
9. [Asian black-spined toad](#) (*Duttaphrynus melanostictus*)
10. High-risk turtles (including [red-eared slider turtle](#))
11. High-risk snakes
12. High-risk ants

You are one of more than 2000 Weed Spotters in Queensland looking for new incursions of these high-risk invasive plants, and your vigilance significantly extends the surveillance capability across the state, increasing the likelihood of early detection and helping to protect your region from the impacts of new weeds.

If you think you have seen a [prohibited](#) or [restricted \(category 2\)](#) species, reach out to your Weed Spotters [regional coordinator](#), send photos or specimens to the [Queensland Herbarium](#), or contact Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23** or [online](#).

Have you seen these weeds?



Pithecellobium dulce (Madras thorn)



Madras thorn is a tree up to 20m tall with a pair of short, sharp spines at the base of each leaf and pinkish pods that are often twisted or coiled, containing white pulp and shiny reddish-black seeds.

[Find out more](#)



Cecropia spp. (Mexican bean tree)

Mexican bean trees are fast-growing trees, 10-20m tall, with large alternately arranged leaves 10-50cm wide, resembling paw-paw leaves, lower leaf surfaces densely covered with white hairs, and tiny yellow flowers arranged in clusters of spikes 12-18cm long.

[Find out more](#)

Monthly weed notifications

There were 8 weed notifications for June 2026.

[Find out more](#)



Regional coordinator profile: Laura Lopresti



Laura works as a botanist with the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS), part of the federal government's Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The NAQS plant health team watches out for new and emerging pests, plants, and diseases across northern Australia. Laura has a background in plant research, centred around what factors contribute to alien invasion success when plants are introduced to new regions. Laura is our new regional coordinator for Cairns, Atherton Tableland & Torres Strait and can assist weed spotters in this region - Laura.Lopresti@aff.gov.au.

Emerging weeds to watch for in your region this month:

- [South East Queensland](#)
- [Burnett-Mary](#)
- [Queensland Murray Darling Region](#)
- [Condamine](#)
- [Desert Channels](#)
- [South West Queensland](#)
- [Fitzroy Basin](#)
- [Mackay-Whitsunday](#)
- [Southern Gulf](#)
- [Northern Gulf](#)
- [Dry Tropics](#)
- [Wet Tropics](#)
- [Cape York](#)
- [Torres Strait](#)

New to the Weed Spotters Network?

Members of the Weed Spotters Network aim to detect and report new and emerging high-risk priority target weeds before they become established in Queensland. Are you ready to start spotting weeds in your region? [Download the Weed Spotters Handbook](#).

If you suspect that you have found a weed that is a [prohibited or restricted \(Category 2\) invasive plant](#), contact Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**, email photos to Queensland.Herbarium@gld.gov.au or contact your [Weed Spotters regional coordinator](#).



Missed something?

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[Weed Spotters Network Queensland](#) is a joint project between the [Queensland Herbarium](#), the [Department of Primary Industries](#) and local governments with funding support from the Land Protection Fund.

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