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How to clear Privet without going mad



By Barry Lees

Many properties in this area have dense stands of privet, often along creeks. Landowners may have tried to clear it but it has a nasty habit of growing back, destroying your good work. In frustration you may have given up, and the privet has got thicker and

covered more area until it is too big to think about.

My advice is to relax, have another cuppa and decide where you would like to start clearing. Mark off an area about 5m square and remove the privet plants, ensuring you don't tread on any natives present. With increased sunlight, hundreds of privet seedlings will rush out of the ground. When they are 10 or 20cm tall, pull them out. If there are absolutely no natives present, you could spray them but I prefer not to. You will need to do this 3 or 4 times over a year or two, but their numbers will decrease as you deplete the seed bank. If very few natives have appeared after 2 years, you could plant some additional shrubs and groundcovers.

Admire your work in this section and ignore the rest. Think how good this bit will look in a few years' time. Do the next section when you feel you have time to do the follow-up on the new section and the previous one. The process can get addictive! Any single privet plants in areas of good bush can be removed anytime. You might not have cleared all the privet before you move into the nursing home, but it doesn't matter – be proud of what you have done and hope the next owner carries on your good work.



Privets up to 1m high can usually be pulled out. Bigger plants should be cut off close to the ground and painted with neat glyphosate (Roundup) within 15 seconds. Try to cut them horizontally so the herbicide stays on the

cut longer. On larger trunks, you only need to put herbicide around the edge where the sap runs. I use a small plastic container like those sold for sewing machine oil – put a tiny hole in the top to control the flow of herbicide. Add colouring (Herbicide) so you can see what you have done. For bigger trees, cut the trunk about a metre above the ground and put the tree on your ever-growing pile, then it is easier to do the final cut and paint close to the ground.

Along creek banks, only clear 2 or 3 metres at a time. Don't do more until the last section is stabilised with natural regrowth or new plants. I have seen bad erosion where people get enthusiastic and clear too much.

To those Landowners who have given up on privet, I encourage you to read this article again, find your zoom and get stuck into it! Landcare can help with planning, techniques, advice on what to plant and where to find the plants.

Go to www.stillcreeklandcare.org.au or Facebook.