

# Weed Management Policy (**TRIALING**)

Trial approved and Released for comment 12/8/2022 (Version 1.5)

Weeds are a natural part of any garden and serve an ecological purpose to kick start growth in barren soil, producing green waste that the entire ecosystem can utilise to promote growth. However, in a community garden setting, overgrown weeds in one plot affect many neighbouring plots when they are not managed to a satisfactory level.

When a weed is young it can be easily managed to prevent an impact on others but if allowed to grow, flower and then set seeds it will negatively impact not only your experience but also the experience of the other members of the community garden. Kept unchecked, weeds can consume and depress even the most optimistic gardener when weeds keep on popping up.

It is often said that 1 year of weed seeds equals 7 years of pulling weeds. This is so true and one of the reasons why this policy exists - so that our members spend the next few years enjoying their gardens rather than being overwhelmed by weeds.

This policy outlines the principles, process and guidelines related to the management of weeds at Dapto Community Farm with the objective of minimising impact to the environment and others.

With a concerted effort and early intervention, we think it is possible to be **"WEED FREE in '23"**



## Principles

This policy is written in accordance with the following principles:

- To make it fair for all members at various stages of their garden journey by setting common standards of management of weeds. The aim is to encourage all members to maintain their plots to a satisfactory level that does not impact on the enjoyment of other members
- All members have a right to access their plot without being affected by the weeds of another plot
- All members should have any actions on their plots communicated to them and have an ability to request more time or a review. The committee should reasonably consider the requests
- The committee should be able to recover all reasonable costs.

# Definitions

## Weed Status

The following statuses are used to describe the weed status of beds and their corresponding impact on the other plots, members and tenants of the farm.

Status	Description & Impact	Notice Period
<b>Seeded Weeds</b>  <b>[ Highest Impact ]</b>	<p><b>Weeds seeds are formed.</b> Weed seeds are visible and if left to dry would easily be dispersed by the wind and birds.</p> <p>Weeds with seeds will impact on other beds and the plots of neighbours. A single seed can be dispersed by the wind upto the entire length of the Dapto Community Farm and affect large numbers of members</p>	<p>A member given notice of their plot being in this status has <b>10 days to remove all weeds</b> from the bed using only the approved methods.</p> <p>Particular care should be taken by the member not to propagate the weed seeds into neighbouring plots.</p> <p><b>N.B. Use of a whipper snipper is prohibited as this spreads the weed seeds throughout the neighbouring plots</b></p>
<b>Flowering Weeds</b>  <b>[ Moderate Impact ]</b>	<p><b>Weeds are flowering</b>, but have not progressed to seeds.</p> <p><b>There is potential to impact negatively on other members as neighbours get anxious that soon their plots will have to deal with weed seeds.</b></p> <p><b>Overgrown weeds can also impact on access to beds</b></p>	<p>A member given notice of their plot being in this status has <b>2 weeks to remove all weeds</b> from the bed using the approved methods.</p> <p><b>N.B. Use of a whipper snipper is prohibited as this spreads the weed seeds throughout the neighbouring gardens</b></p>
<b>Growing Weeds</b>  <b>[ Low Impact ]</b>	<p>Weeds are growing in the plot, but have not begun flowering. <b>Aesthetic Impact only.</b></p> <p><b>Weeds look untidy but pose no threat to a neighbouring garden</b></p>	<p>A member given notice of their plot being in this status has to monitor their plot for weeds and remove them prior to flowering.</p>
<b>No Weeds</b> <b>[ No Impact , only positive Impact ]</b>	<p>No weeds are present in the garden beds. <b>No Impact - All is good with the world</b></p>	<p>A member with a plot in this status should be congratulated and recognised. Happy days for the members who can do a dance and enjoy weed free gardening.</p>

**Plot Manager.** The Plot Manager has the authority given to them from the committee to execute the aspects of the policy. Where an action requires the Committee , the policy will indicate this.

**Undesirable Weeds.** These are weeds identified in Table ?? which are especially intrusive and the subject of this policy. A Plot review is undertaken, the person does not consider if the weeds are undesirable, only that weeds exist and are flowering and seeding. However the plot manager will consider plots with undesirable weeds as a higher impact and any weeds that are not wind bourne as localised impact on the plot only.

Photo	Name and Description of Weed
Bidens	Bidens
	Thistle

## Overview of the process

- Regular inspections of all plots will be conducted in response to a prescribed schedule and in some cases inspections or status updates may be initiated from a review in response to a complaint from other members
- Dapto Community Farm will maintain a weed status for each rented garden plot and publish this to all members at periodic intervals
- Plots with weeds that have seeded will be assigned the worst status. Plots with little to no weeds will be assigned the best status
- Members will be given a period of time to remove weeds and achieve a status one lower than their current and until they reach the no weeds status
- Only approved methods of weed management (i.e removal) will be undertaken so as to reduce the impact on neighbouring beds and on the environment
- Where members do not attend to their garden beds to reduce weeds to a lower status level in the prescribed notice time must pay additional fees to remove the weeds by a third party and may have their plot relocated or cancelled.
- A notice of plot reallocation or cancellation can be appealed to the committee.

## Inspections

### Regular Inspections

Inspections of all plots with respect to weeds will be conducted on at least a monthly basis and a blank plot plan updated with colour coded status showing the various statuses. This will be published through email and on the notice board.

Plots that have a status of red and orange require immediate attention and will have 10 days and 2 weeks respectively to resolve their plots. An example of the status of plots after a site inspection

<b>Creek Beds</b>				Bed No.
<b>Mountain Range Farm</b>				<b>42-??</b>
No Weeds ▾	No Weeds ▾	Weeds Flowering ▾	Weeds Growing ▾	<b>41</b>
No Weeds ▾	No Weeds ▾	No Weeds ▾	<b>Weed Seeds ▾</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Weed Seeds ▾</b>	<b>Weed Seeds ▾</b>	No Weeds ▾	No Weeds ▾	<b>39</b>
No Weeds ▾	No Weeds ▾	No Weeds ▾	No Weeds ▾	<b>38</b>

## Separating Beds into Plots

For the purposes of the inspection, all beds are split into either quarters ( for 58m and 78m beds) or halves ( for 32m beds). The person carrying out the inspection will set a status for each of these plot segments of which there are 268.

A single plot may be only a section of your rental. If any weeds (one or many) are found in any section of a plot, the entire plot is marked with the highest status.

## Flagging Seed Saver Plants on your Plot

If you are growing plants for the purposes of saving seeds then you must mark these plants with a bamboo stick tied with a blue tape or rag signifying your intent to harvest the seeds of these plants . The inspection will ignore any such plants identified in this way (subject to the exceptions below).

The following exceptions apply to this point and must be adhered to.

- Seed Saver plants must be within the boundary of your plot and not extend into walkways that impede other members
- The following plants are excluded from seed saving: Amaranth, Bidens, Thistle, Purslane, Oxalis, Onion Weed

## Making Corrections

After the review is published members can look at their status and if they do not agree on the status or have since made cleanups, they can let the secretary know and a further inspection will be carried out.

## Notifying us if the plots can't be cleaned in the time period.

If you are away or unable to clean the plot in the required timeframe, please let the Plot Manager know so that an extension of time can be considered. The Plot Manager will consider all reasonable requests

If you have a special need for help from the members of the farm due to extenuating circumstances, please let the Plot Manager know of your circumstances and the Plot Manager will inform all members as a call to assist.

## Anonymously reporting a weed issue with a neighbouring plot

Any member can report on the status of a neighbour or their own plot at any time in the month. These are made from an online form on the DCF website and will automatically be sent from the website to the person performing inspections so they can verify the report.

## Clean up of Plots

### Automatic Extension of Time

Under some circumstances due to inclement weather such as high heat, strong winds, heavy rain or flood, the Plot Manager will grant an automatic extension of the time required to rectify the plot.

As a matter of courtesy for other members, if one or more of your plots are of status red or orange and the time has elapsed due to one or more weather events, at the first available opportunity of good weather, the cleaning of your plot should be prioritised to ensure impact on others is reduced.

## Plot Manager to Assess Worst Beds for Corrective Action

Upon each completion of a review, the Plot Manager will compare the current review against the previous review to determine which plots require immediate action. These plots are typically those that have a RED or ORANGE status.

Plots that have remained at the worst status in two consecutive months and have the highest impact on other members will be prioritised over beds that have improved, or are at a lesser status. In addition, the overall state of the bed (quantity, size and maturity of weeds, restricted access and rubbish) will be considered in the decision to instigate a corrective action.

The committee, at its discretion, may choose plot reduction or plot cancellation as a suitable action in the event of repeatedly bad plots or unpaid fees.

There is no requirement for the Plot Manager to take action on any GREEN or YELLOW beds.

## Followup Inspection

Plots deemed by the Plot Manager that require a potential corrective action will have a followup inspection performed after the period to clean a plot elapses. If the plot has not improved to a lower status level in that period, a notice of cleanup will be sent to the member.

## Notice of Clean Up

The Plot Manager will notify the member of the Plot Manager's intention to intervene and clean up one or more plots rented by the member, reduce their allocation or cancel their plot allocation outright.

If a cleanup is proposed, then the notice will advise which plots are affected and provide an indicative estimate of cost to remove weeds from those plots. The costs will be based on the cost rates defined in this policy and will indicate an upper estimate, if less weeds are found, the cost will be less. If rubbish is found, then the cost to remove the rubbish will be on top of the cost to remove the weeds.

The notice will indicate the Plot Manager's intention of how to dispose or harvest any remaining crops and who will be the beneficiary.

The member may request for an extension of time to allow them to clean their plots or make other arrangements with the Plot Manager. This request must be made within 7 days of the notice by contacting the nominated person shown on the Notice. Any request by the member will be reasonably considered and the member advised.

## Plot Manager can commission a third party to clean the bed

Where no appeal is received, the Plot Manager will commission a third party to clean plots that have exceeded the rectification (10 or 14 days) and the notice period (7 days).

The third party will be instructed to remove weeds such that the level drops at least one status and that the costs are minimised for the member while at the same time minimise impact for neighbouring plots.

In the case of a RED status, the weeds that have seeded and flowered will be cut and bagged and taken offsite. This lowers the status to a YELLOW acceptable level.

## Cost Estimate of Weed Removal from a Plot

The cost to remove weeds is related to the size of the plot and severity of the weeds.

As an estimate of the cost, the Plot Manager will use a per metre rate. That is, for a ½ plot of a 58 metre bed the cost in this case will be calculated on a 29m plot allotment. Please note the pricing is an upper estimate of what is required and to allow the Plot Manager a reasonable chance to commission a third party.

Size	Cost Rate	Upper Cost Estimate
½ 32 m bed	\$5 per metre	\$ 80
¼ 78 m bed	\$5 per metre	\$ 100
½ 58 m bed	\$5 per metre	\$ 145
Full 58m Bed	\$5 per metre	\$ 290
Rubbish Removal	Additional cost :- As per Wollongong Council Rates for General Household Waste	
Green Waste Removal	Weed seeds :- As per Wollongong Council Rates for Green Waste	

## Use of any harvestable produce

If the Plot Manager takes action to clean the plot, any produce deemed harvestable may be harvested and provided back to the member, to OZ Harvest or an equivalent community charity, depending on what was advised to the member.

Any produce harvested is not to be shared among other members or sold.

The Plot Manager will use reasonable efforts but cannot guarantee to preserve any Seed Saver plants even if these are marked appropriately.

## No Guarantee to Retain Purchased Seedlings or Plants

The committee **does not guarantee** that any plants or seedlings that may be growing amongst the weeds will be preserved when a clean up is in progress. The cost of damage to a member's plants or the cost to replace any plants will be borne by the member whose plot is being cleaned and not the committee.

## Recovery of Cost by the Committee

The committee reserves the right to recover any costs to rehabilitate the plot. The cost of which will be met by the member by way of the use of their rental bond or an invoice issued to the member.

If the plot is cleaned by the member prior to the contractor attending the plot, there will be no charge if the plot is cleaned to a satisfactory level. Otherwise there may be a charge to complete the cleanup to a satisfactory level.

The cost for rehabilitation will be recovered from the plot deposit or if funds are not held in trust it will be invoiced directly to the member. The member has 2 weeks to pay the invoice or repay their deposit

# Adjustment of Plot Rental

## Plot Rental Reduction

If the cost of rehabilitation or the replacement bond cannot be recovered within 2 weeks of the cleanup, the plot rental may be reduced.

In the case a member has multiple plot allotments, the committee may choose to reduce the plots rented by the member to allow the member to demonstrate they can maintain a smaller allocation.

Notice of intent to cancel all or some plot allocations will be provided to the member.

Removed plots will be given to the pool for reallocation based on the Plot Allocation Policy after 3 days.

## Plot Rental Cancellation

If the cost of rehabilitation or replacement bond cannot be recovered within 2 weeks of the cleanup, all plot rentals by the member may be cancelled. The committee may choose this course of action after a reduction of plots is first undertaken, but may also choose to cancel all plot rentals immediately where there are indications the member will not return.

Notice of intent to cancel all plot allocations will be provided to the member.

Removed plots will be given to the pool for reallocation based on the Plot Allocation Policy after 3 days.

## Right of Appeal

The member may provide a reason within 3 days why the plot cannot be cleaned in the prescribed time frame or a reason provided as to why the plot rental should not be cancelled. In response to a member's submission, further time may be granted by the committee or a decision to cancel or reduce their plot rental may be reconsidered.

The committee can also decide to continue with the proposed cancellation or reduction of plots.

## Approved Methods of Weed Removal

The following methods to remove or suppress weeds are discussed below. Members must take note of which methods are approved for the respective weeds status.

**\*\* Please note that if your bed is at the Seeded Weeds status (RED), the only approved methods are Manual Removal or an application of a Weed Mat.**

**\*\* Use of a whipper snipper and lawn mower is prohibited for the status of RED or ORANGE. \*\***

Weed Removal Method	What is involved	Approved for the following statuses
Herbicide	Not approved for use by members as overspray can easily occur and affect other members' crops.	<b>Not Approved.</b> Not to be used by members.



	Slasher is a certified organic herbicide and may be used by a third party professional to remove large shrubs or trees	Only to be used by a trained professional in a small number of exceptional cases.
<b>Burn weeds</b>	Small weeds that have started to sprout may be burned using a handheld burner	<b>Green</b> only
<b>Manual Removal</b>	<p>Cutting the weeds and any associated flowers and seeds.</p> <p>This should be done carefully so as to not scatter the seeds onto neighbouring plots.</p> <p>Place any seeds into a bag for disposal into your green bins at home. Alternatively cut the tall stalks and lay them down on your bed in a covered stockpile.</p> <p>Any non-seeded foliage can be taken to the compost bins or left on the bed to decompose.</p>	<p><b>All statuses.</b></p> <p>Please Note: Weed seeds for Oxalis, Onion Weed, Nut Grass and Amaranth should be bagged and disposed of in the green bin at home.</p>
<b>Weed Mat</b>	<p>A synthetic mat that can be installed on top of the garden bed to prevent further weeds from establishing. The weeds must be removed first to be able to successfully install a weed mat.</p> <p>Once installed you can punch or cut a hold to allow you to plant seedlings.</p> <p>The weed mat must be installed correctly to ensure it doesn't blow away or float away in the case of a flood.</p>	<p><b>All statuses.</b></p> <p>The weed mat may be installed where the member is away for an extended period of time and cannot arrange for the bed to be maintained.</p>
<b>Whipper Snipper</b>	<p>An electric or fuel edge cutter.</p> <p>This chops the weed down to the ground to allow a lawn mower to then cut or mulch the remaining.</p>	<p><b>Green and Yellow</b> only</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE. A Whipper snipper is NOT TO BE USED where there are any Weeds that have seeds. Using this device in this instance will cast and spread all the seeds to the neighbouring plots</p>
<b>Mowing</b>	A plot may be mowed to keep weeds and grass to a minimum. Like a lawn, the garden plot can be mowed regularly,	<b>Green and Yellow</b> only. Please note the <b>lawn mower must use a catcher</b> to ensure any seeds are collected and not scattered to neighbouring plots.

## Resources

The following resources are used to implement this policy

Resource	
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Plot Weed Review	
Reporting a Plot	
Plot Allocation Policy	
Growers Guidelines	

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