

Got a plant....? Don't know what it is.....?

Before proceeding with weed control techniques, it is important that we are sure that what we are controlling is actually a weed!

This is important for 2 reasons:

- Firstly, so we are not inadvertently damaging indigenous vegetation
- Secondly, so we can choose the correct technique to effectively control that plant.

The following guide aims to help you step out how to identify your offending plant.

Collect and Classify

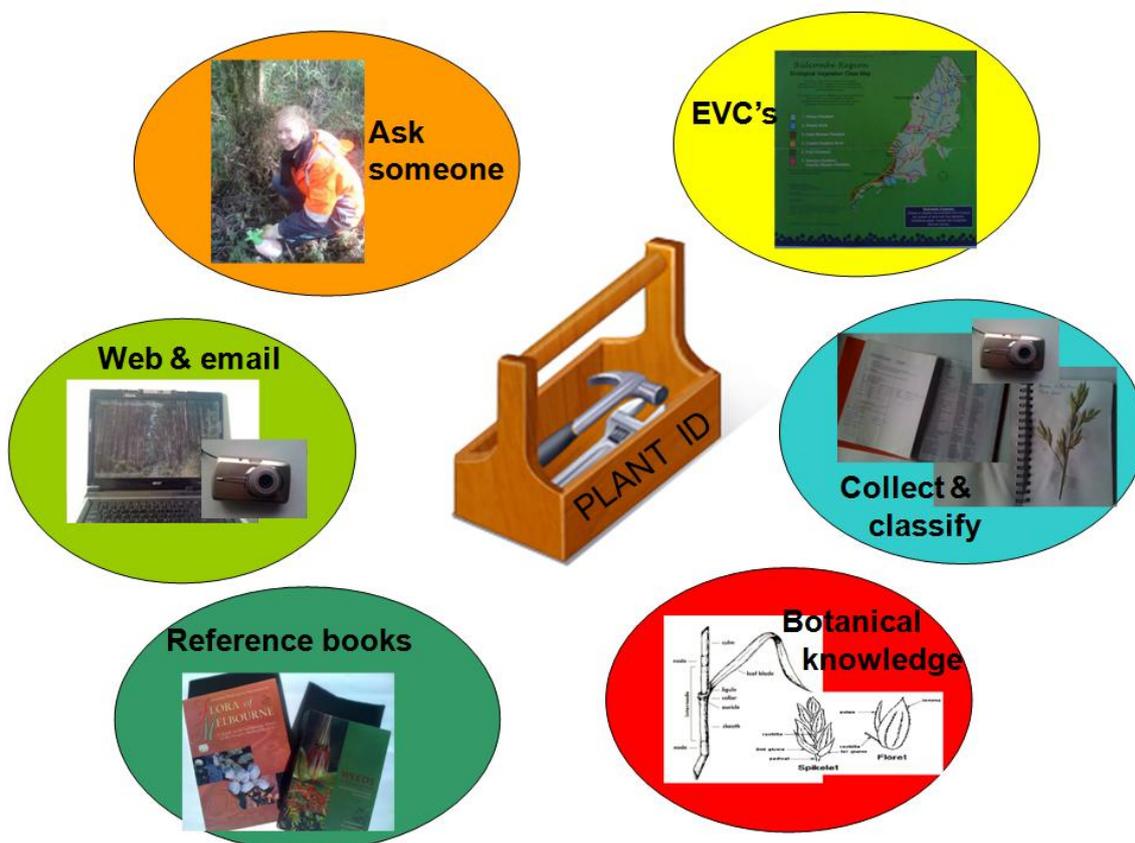
Ask Someone

EVCs

Local Field Guides

Reference Books

Google it



Collect and Classify!

Grab a bit. Take a photo.. No matter how good we think our memory is, as soon as it comes to remembering whether or not a leaf had a hairy stem, we are failed yet again.

If you can get a small bit of the plant, preferable a piece with a leaf, a flower, a bit of stem and maybe a fruit, then that is fantastic. Ideally, press this sample into a notebook, to help prevent it from shrivelling before you can get it back to ID it.

Sometimes however, bits of plants are too big, too prickly or too rigid to get a good piece to press in a book. In this case, take a photo with your phone. Once again, try and get photos of any distinguishing features, as these usually come in handy when id-ing later.

Important characteristics to take note of when identifying plants are:

Is it a grass, lily, climber, shrub or tree?

What kind of habit does it have?

What size is it?

What colour are the leaves?

What size are its leaves?

Are the leaves hairy, shiny or waxy on the top/bottom?

What shape are its leaves?

Is the margin wavy, serrated or smooth?

Does it have flowers?

What colour are its flowers?

How big are its flowers?

What shape are its flowers?

How many petals does its flower have?

Are there lots of flowers together, or are they individuals?

Ask Someone!

So, we all know one of those 'plant people'. You know the ones, the kinda weird, nerdy ones who have a knack for knowing plants names. In Latin! Make them useful for once, and get some information from them. Especially if they are local, they may not need any more than a description over the phone to help you identify your weedy culprit.

You: 'Gday Trish!'

Trish: 'Gday mate'

You: 'Hey Trish I've got a plant here..... Its leaves are grey green and flat to the ground. It's got a tall flowering stem with bright purple flowers....'

Trish: 'Hmmmmmmm.....''

You: 'Oh, and its prickly as Hell!'

Trish: 'You've got yourself a thistle problem'.

EVCs

EVCs or Ecological Vegetation Class's, give descriptions of the expected native vegetation that can be found in any given area. This information is based on vegetation information dating back to pre 1750's, and are generally determined by environmental factors such as; rainfall, soil type, aspect, altitude etc.

These EVC lists can help you to eliminate native species from your weeds list, additionally, often by knowing the expected native vegetation type, we can also predict the expected or typical weed species found in those areas.

To access EVC benchmarks and identify which EVC or EVCs your property has, go to:

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/about-dse/interactive-maps> and select the Biodiversity Interactive Map. This map will allow you to zoom around and identify your EVC, then go to: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/conservation-and-environment/native-vegetation-groups-for-victoria/ecological-vegetation-class-etc-benchmarks-by-bioregion> which will allow you to look at a list of native plant species that you could expect to find in that vegetation class.

Local Field Guides

Many local landcare groups and councils have produced handy Weed Id and Native plant Id booklets, which are available either free or for minimal cost.

These are tailored specifically to local areas, and are very useful for identifying common species local to you.

A trip to local Shire Offices, or Landcare headquarters are usually well worth the visit, as they oft yield many information brochures and booklets about vegetation as well as other good land management practices, all in one easy stop. Don't be afraid, just go in and ask what they have to offer!

Today, we have been helpful enough to provide some of the local resources, which we have found useful in the past.

Reference Books

So you phoned your nerdy friend. No help.

You played with the Biodiversity Interactive Map and checked out the EVCs. Uneventful.

You've checked out the local Field Guides. Still nothing?!

Now it's time to really hit the books. There are a few titles that are essential to any good land managers' arsenal.

Readily available and worth their weight in gold, the following titles cover almost any and all plants you could dream of encountering on a day to day basis:

- Weeds of the South East: An Identification Guide for Australia,
F.J Richardson, R.G Richardson, R.C.H Shepherd
- Native Trees and Shrubs of South Eastern Australia
Leon Costermans
- Flora of Melbourne: A Guide to the Indigenous Plants of the Greater Melbourne Area
Society for Growing Australian Plants Maroondah, Inc.

These books are reasonably priced, and can prove to be highly cost effective if it means correctly identifying and treating specific weed species. The following web sites stock these titles, plus many more land management topic books:

- <http://www.publish.csiro.au>
- <http://www.weedinfo.com.au>

Google It!

So, hopefully by now you have some idea as to what plant you are dealing with!

And if it has been determined to be a weed, then next we must determine how best to control it.

Some of the above steps are also useful in determining control techniques, for instance, calling a friend.

But falling short of that simple solution, the internet brings to your fingertips a worlds worth of research and results on the effectiveness of different control methods.

Various websites such as Department of Primary Industries and Landcare groups have a wealth of information on control techniques, and for those a little braver of heart you can delve deeply into scientific literature describing trials of various control methods.

Set aside some time, as you may have to do some sifting to find useful information!