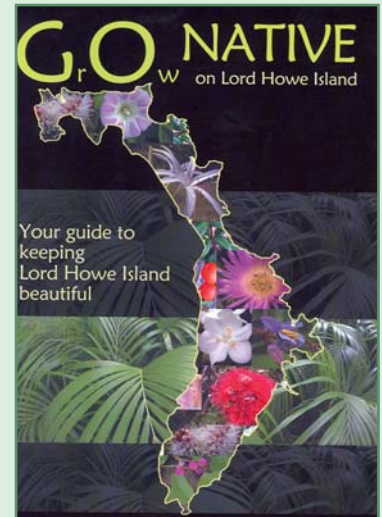


# STOP THE SPREAD OF *PITTOSPORUM* ON LORD HOWE ISLAND

## overview of the project

The Lord Howe Island Board carried out this weed reduction project targeting *Pittosporum undulatum* on a heavily infested site called Transit Hill, previously a garden. The vegetation of Lord Howe Island is unique in that nearly half of the plants do not occur anywhere else in Australia. *Pittosporum*, along with other berry-bearing weeds, threatens the distinctive vegetation profile of the island. *Pittosporum* is spread by birds, potentially allowing it to invade less accessible regions, making control very difficult. The project team succeeded in reducing the infestation of *Pittosporum*, thereby limiting the spread into these remote areas. They aim to eventually eliminate these weeds from the island. The Board also produced a weed identification booklet during the project for distribution among residents. A further significant outcome was the level of community involvement in the project. Many volunteers participated, both from the island and the mainland, offering not only enthusiasm but expertise.

*The booklet used by residents to identify weeds*



## how the project was carried out

The project was carried out with the help of volunteers from Friends of Lord Howe Island, who have been successfully coordinating weeding programs on the island since 2000. Other volunteers, also trained bush regenerators, were brought from the mainland to assist. At the start of the project preliminary information was gathered by mapping the site and conducting a weed density report for five of the major weed species. This report confirmed that that the project site was the area of worst *Pittosporum* infestation on the island. The weeds were treated in three successive yearly sweeps across the site. Operators cut down mature plants, then applied a mixture of herbicide and oil to the exposed stumps. Smaller juvenile plants were pulled out manually.

## outcomes now and in the future

The Board developed and published a booklet on weed identification during the project that will provide valuable information for future programs and help promote community ownership of the fight against weeds. It is designed to help residents recognise and control weeds on their properties, and contains recommendations for native garden plants that can be used as alternatives. The maps that were developed of the site will be a useful benchmark for future programs, containing weed density data to monitor the progress being made. These diagrams show the numbers of juvenile and mature *Pittosporum* at each re-treatment, and it is clear that weed density has been greatly reduced or is even zero in some areas after treatment.

The input of volunteers has fostered a valuable exchange of knowledge and ideas. Many of the volunteers are experienced bush regenerators and were able to offer informal training for island staff and residents. The Board is continuing with even greater vigour to fight the weed threat on the island with regular re-treatments, as long term maintenance of the weed eradication program is critical. As a further positive outcome, Transit Hill has now been returned to Crown Land, and can be incorporated into future island management plans.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

Although the project met no serious obstacles in implementation, initial mapping of the site underestimated the numbers of mature *Pittosporum*. Operators had not expected the extent of the problem to be so large. Treating the extra trees added some unanticipated labour costs to the project.

This project has successfully removed a serious weed threat on Lord Howe Island. Mature fruit-bearing *Pittosporum* trees that were a potential source of infestation for more remote areas have been treated with no sign of re-shooting. Seeds built up over years will continue to germinate, but with each re-treatment these numbers are dwindling and will eventually drop to zero. This success is demonstrated by the clear visual evidence in the weed density maps and graphs of weed numbers.