Friends of Steele Creek

Weeding by planting.

The story of Wandering Trad control along Steele Creek so far.

In April 2024, we released Leaf Smut Fungus *Kordyana brasiliensis*, an approved biological control agent, to control Wandering Trad along Steele Creek. A big thank you to the Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs (CWAD) who provided information on their successful Trad biocontrol project, and steppes us through the first release.

What's the problem?

Wandering Trad is an invasive plant native to South America. It grows vigorously in Victoria along waterways and on damp forest floors, smothering the understorey. This reduces native plant diversity and cover, wildlife habitat, and impacts ecosystem health. Trad is a known skin irritant to domestic dogs.

Where is this happening?

Over 2024, the Smut Fungus will be released in Wandering Trad patches along Steele Creek in Essendon West and Niddrie.

Why use a biological control?

Wandering Trad has traditionally been controlled by Fluroxypyr, a broadleaf herbicide. It can't be used within 1m of a waterway; where Trad grows and requires repeat applications for it to be effective. Our community wants to see less herbicide use, when other options are available that are don't harm our sensitive waterway ecosystems. Enter Smut Fungus. Smut keeps Wandering Trad in check back in South America and was part of a massive and thorough CSIRO research project before being approved for use here. It won't eradicate Wandering Trad, but will reduce growth over time and allow our indigenous understorey to take back the balance. Read more about the CSIRO work in the links below.

How are you doing it?

Infected trad cuttings are collected from nursery sites carefully managed by the Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs (CWAD). The cuttings get planted at 1m intervals throughout the trad patch. Monitoring then takes place with hope that the smut fungus establishes within a few months. Once established, it spreads unaided.

Step-by step- process for Trad planting:

- Make a shallow digging
- Place 4-5 plants, root first, into the hole, cover
- Spray the underside of infected leave with water
- Plant out every meter or so in patch
- Monitor every few weeks
- Establishment should be visible within a few months
- If some plants don't establish, re-plant in those areas
- Once established, it will spread naturally within the patch
- Plant along animal trails, the fungus spores and infected leaves are carried in animal fur
- Native ground flora can be manually re-established to replace Trad, prefererable species may include:

Replacement indigenous species (Stream bank Shrubland pre-1750 EVC)

Small Herbs	Medium Herbs	Large herbs
Crassula helmsii Swamp Crassula	*Acaena novae-zelandiae* Bidgee-widgee	*Persicaria decipiens* Slender Knotweed
Dichondra repens Kidney-weed	*Hydrocotyle verticillata* Shield Pennywort	*Epilobium billardierianum* Variable Willow-herb
Apium prostratum Sea Celery	*Oxalis perennans* Grassland Wood-sorrel	

How do I get involved?

Join our community Trad planting days, keep an eye on our Facebook page for upcoming dates. Contact us by email : friendsofsteelecreekinc@gmail.com

More information please?

https://research.csiro.au/wandering-trad/background/
https://research.csiro.au/wandering-trad/
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1049964422001438
https://www.sgln.net.au/2021/11/24/biological-control-of-wandering-tradescantia/

Wandering Trad cuttings from the nursery sites, suffering from Smut Fungus (yellow patches)

Smut Fungus spores (white spots) on the underside of the Trad leaf). Spores are waterborne.

Infected Trad cuttings are grouped together, ready to be planted root first

Make a small digging, plant the bunch of cuttings and cover over.
They like a nice sheltered spot,
plant along animal tracks to help disperse the fungus

Once planted, spray the under sides of leaves with water
to help the Smut Fungus spores disperse.