



When the garden escapes, nature pays the price.

THE CHALLENGE

Our saltmarshes and other important habitats are already under pressure

Saltmarsh and other wetland systems in our community are among the most ecologically significant and most fragile habitats in the region. They support rare plants, migratory shorebirds, juvenile fish, and water filtration processes that benefit our whole community. But these ecosystems face an escalating cascade of threats:

Land encroachment	Climate change	Habitat loss
Coastal development shrinks and fragments habitat boundaries	Shifting rainfall, sea level rise and temperature extremes alter hydrology	Drainage, fill and clearing eliminate the mosaic these species depend on
Chemical use	Population pressure	Weed infestation
Pesticide and nutrient run-off from the catchment degrade water quality	Growing demands on land and water intensify all other stressors	The one threat residents can directly prevent — but currently limited



Garden escapees are a serious threat. Ornamental plants that look beautiful in your garden can invade nearby sand dunes, saltmarshes and wetlands, outcompeting native species and dismantling habitats that have taken thousands of years to form.

Understanding weed infestation in our high conservation value areas — and what every resident can do to help



THE PROBLEM IN YOUR BACKYARD



How garden plants become habitat destroyers

Many ornamental/garden plants sold in nurseries and big hardware chains are not native to Tasmania. When these plants escape into adjacent bushland, waterways or wetlands, they find conditions with no natural competitors or herbivores to keep them in check. The result is rapid, unchecked spread that:

- Smothers native groundcover, sedges, and saltmarsh species under dense canopies of leaf litter or climbing growth
- Alters soil chemistry and structure, making it harder for native seedlings to re-establish
- Intercepts light and water that native plants depend on
- Reduces habitat quality for native fauna, including threatened and migratory species

Common garden escapees that threaten our local wetlands and high conservation value areas include:

1 Agapanthus

Dense root mats displace native understorey in riparian zones



2 Cotoneaster

Bird-dispersed berries spread rapidly into bushland edges



3 Mirror bush

Shrub to tree, thick and glossy dark green leaves; spreads rapidly via bird dispersed seeds



4 Pig's ear/cotyledon

Highly invasive succulent grows rapidly in sandy soil, reproduces via seed and rhizomes



5 Soap Aloe

Erect succulent perennial herb, usually without stems except for flower stalk. Naturalised in many states



6 Ivys

Climbs and kills native trees; spreads across shaded wetland floors



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Weed infestation is the last thing we want added to this list — and it is one of the few threats that residents hold directly in their hands.

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OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE DOING THE HEAVY LIFTING, BUT THEY NEED YOUR HELP

Sorell Council recognises weed infestation as one of the most pressing natural resource management challenges in our LGA. Dedicated Landcare volunteers pour hundreds of hours each year into removing invasive plants from our most sensitive areas.

Their work is extraordinary, but the scale of the problem is growing faster than volunteer capacity alone can address. Every resident living near or within a high conservation value area has a direct role to play.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW



Five simple steps every resident can take

The single most cost-effective action is straightforward: replace non-native ornamentals in your garden with local native plants. Here is how to get started.

STEP 01

Audit your garden

Check for declared weeds or known escapees. Some online apps such as iNaturalist, WeedScan or Plantnet can help identify problem plants.

STEP 02

Remove & dispose

Do not compost invasives – bag, sun dry and bin them or contact Sorell Council for disposal advice.

STEP 03

Plant local natives

Tasmanian native plants suit our soils and climate - lower maintenance, better wildlife value, zero escape risk.

STEP 04

Join Landcare

Volunteer with a local group to help remove weeds and restore native vegetation in your areas. Find your local landcare group here – landcareaus.org.au/find-a-group

STEP 05

Spread the word

Talk to neighbours, especially those near wetlands, waterways, or bushland reserves.



FIND LOCAL PLANT BOOK

Visit Sorell Council office to secure a copy of the booklets such as Weed Warning or Grow Local. These can also be downloaded via the QR codes below:

Weeds Warning ➤



Grow Local ➤



BACKYARD BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM

Create habitat at home with local natives.

Take part in Council's initiative of improving backyards with native alternatives at no cost to you. Collect your free saplings from our registered nursery and replace your ornamental plants with natives to your area and connect the habitat with broader landscape.

This program aims to support local residents in the community to plant native species in their yards, enhancing local habitats and improving biodiversity across the municipality.

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