

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cactus Infestation in the north of the Shire

The ornamental garden cactus "Harrisia cactus (Harrisia martinii)" is classed as a category 4 noxious weed and it is spreading south of Queensland, infiltrating areas from Yetman to west of Boggabilla.

Moree Plains Shire Council, together with Gwydir and Inverell Shire Councils have formed a partnership with Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority to implement a program designed to work with landholders in an effort to contain the movement of Harrisia in the catchment.

Moree's Noxious Weeds Officer, Ian Schwartz said "The long term aim is to reduce and eventually eliminate the Harrisia cactus infestation."

"We are looking for assistance from landholders in the north of the Shire. We need to do property inspections so we can ascertain the true extent of the infestation and rid the region of this menace" he said.

The native South American plant was planted in miner's gardens around Ipswich and the Capricornia area in the late 1800's.

The plant was registered as weed in 1935 as its impenetrable thickets prolifically cover fertile soils taking over many hectares of land.

Harrisia cactus (Harrisia martinii) is a low growing, sprawling plant. It can be spread by seed and from segments broken off by livestock, wild animals or vehicles. The flowers, shaded pink to white, open at night.

The ripe fruit is bright red and contains up to 800 seeds covered in a sweet sugary substance, making it very attractive to birds, emus, foxes and pigs.

Colonies of the cactus occur in patches of scrub where birds have perched and deposited droppings, with seedlings being protected from damage during early development.

END

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