

Cat's Claw *Macfadyena unguis-cati* control. ~ Alan Gennings

On the Nimbin Rocks Cooperative land Cats Claw vines, as in many parts of Northern Eastern New South Wales, Australia are smothering remnant trees. Infestations on remnant Casuarinas along Goolmangar Creek are of greatest concern for us.

A quick search of the web only revealed one documented study which reported on effectiveness of control over several years with recipes for control [Control of Cats Claw Creeper in Dry Rainforest in the Clarence Valley NSW Australia. \(Unfortunately no publication details\).](#)

In summary the above study used the following the control method:

Cut vines on tree trunks at 1.5 metres. Pull lower portion of vines of the tree and cut again at ground level. The cut stems are treated with roundup mixed rate of 1:1.5 with water. Vines thicker than 1 cm were scraped and dosed.

Smaller vines on shrubs were peeled off and coiled up at the base of the plant.

Cats claw was then given time to regrow (3 to 6 weeks) and then sprayed with glyphosate at 1 : 100 when plants were growing actively.

Fortunately cats claw depends on contact with the ground, so cutting stems kills vines in the canopy.

Apparently cows find cats claw palatable so they may be assisting in moping up our regrowth.

My methods to date;

- For convenience I simply cut the stems at a convenient height and use a 1 litre hand sprayer. I find tin and brush to be slow to use and end up with drops of poison everywhere. I use a 1 litre Hills pump action sprayer (around \$15) the easiest to use. I find a 24cm long thick stainless very sharp "original bowie knife" better than machete's, tomahawks or sectors. I cut all the stems around a trunk, pull the lower stem of the trunk for a few inches and then spray immediately. The blade can be used to pry the vine off the trunk before cutting.
- A lot of people recommend 1:1 dilution with water of glyphosate, for treating cut stems. Such a concentration may not spread as well and I worry about affecting other plants with over spray eg. Casuarina and Silky Oaks being particularly susceptible to roundup. Another earlier paper (not on the web) which only looked at results 3 months after found treatment with 3% glyphosate effective. (Such a light concentration may not kill the underground tubers) This earlier study found **glyphosate more effective** than triclopyr, clopyraid and met-sulfuron-methyl. I tried 17% dilution for cut stems and could then do a little tidying up of some of the cats claw covering the ground and hopefully not damaging the tree too much.
- Monitoring is important though we have followed up sometimes 6 months later, sometimes 1 year later and found the follow up treatment a lot easier and quicker than initial treatment. Regrowth is minimal and may be due to new plants rather regrowth from old tubers. However if follow up spraying can be done while the growing shoots are within reach just a quick foliage spray maybe as low as 3% would be effective. Also pulling new shoots of the trunk and coiling before spraying improves spray inefficiency, less spray on more plants and less spray on natives (technique learnt from Grant)
- Some treatments were done during winter, yet treatment seemed to be just as effective as in the growing season. Probably better done in winter than not done at all.
- I find it good to clear treated stems for about 20 cms around the trunk, either by cutting the stems twice or pull the stems below the cut off the trunk. This makes it easier to ensure all have been cut,

and also makes follow up treatments easier.

- I cannot comment on how effective my treatment is on the remaining underground tubers. There is still a carpet of cats claw on the ground but at least we can stop trees being smothered. Cows maybe moping up some of the shoots which would otherwise find there way onto tree trunks. The vine seems to require good light to flower so by keeping trunk clear this seems to stop most of the flowering (especially of the ground cover growth).

Qld Government is currently testing some insects before releasing for Biological control of Cats claw.

- http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/alan_fletcher/pdf/cats_claw_poster_web.pdf