

What are invasive alien plants?



Invasive alien species are plants that are non-native to an ecosystem, and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health. In particular, they impact adversely upon biodiversity, including a decline or elimination of native species—through competition, predation, or transmission of pathogens—and the disruption of local ecosystems and ecosystem functions. Invasive alien plants, that were introduced and/or spread outside their natural habitats, have affected native biodiversity in almost every ecosystem type on earth and are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Since the 17th century, invasive alien species have contributed to nearly 40% of all animal extinctions for which the cause is known (CBD, 2006).



The control of alien plants Mpumalanga Seville LandCare projects

The problem continues to grow at great socio-economic, health and ecological cost worldwide. Invasive alien species exacerbate poverty and threaten development through their impact on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and natural systems, which form an important basis of peoples' livelihoods in developing countries. This damage is aggravated by climate change, pollution, habitat loss and human-induced disturbance.

The Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries through the LandCare grant spent millions of Rands every year fighting alien plants that have taken over and reduced the grazing capacity in most communal grazing camps, along the riverbanks and wetlands where alien plants have reduced the water runoff and on communal arable lands. The impact of the LandCare Programme in fighting and controlling invasive alien

plants is very intense because in some of the grazing camps the grass species that have been removed by alien plants have started to grow and runoff has improved in most of the river and wetland areas in which the LandCare grant has helped to control the alien plants. We have seen most people receive skills and knowledge on how

to identify the invasive alien plants and how to control them through the LandCare grant, which led to massive improvement in most communal arable and grazing lands, leading to greater agricultural productivity, food security, job creation and a better quality of life for community members.



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