

MR409/1011

14 October 2011

## MADAGASCAN FIREWEED ALERT

Canberrans are being urged to be on the lookout for a new incursion of weed species that has recently been identified in the ACT – Madagascan Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*).

“While the weed is commonly found in the surrounding NSW region, this is the first serious incursion of Madagascan Fireweed in the ACT,” said Steve Taylor, Senior Invasive Weeds Officer, ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

“The first plant was spotted by a member of the public on the Monaro Highway just outside the ACT border and since then plants have been spotted at two other locations in the ACT. These plants have been destroyed.

“Rangers will proactively monitor the areas in which the plants were found.

“Madagascan Fireweed is a small multi-stemmed and vigorous flowering daisy-like plant with numerous bright yellow daisy flowers. Like other daisies, the weed produces fluffy wind borne seeds. Some plants can produce tens of thousands of seeds.”

Mr Taylor said a rapid response to uncover and control the weed will save the ACT significant expenditure in future weed control.

“Eradicating Madagascan Fireweed swiftly will ensure continued protection of our valued native plant communities and grazing lands.

“Another major concern is the toxicity of Madagascan Fireweed to horses and livestock which can cause liver damage similar to toxins found in Paterson’s Curse. Madagascan Fireweed is considered one of the most damaging weeds to grazing land. It often first invades land along roadsides and once established, quickly spreads into neighbouring pastures and reserves.

“I urge the ACT community to be alert to Madagascan Fireweed and help us be proactive in managing this invasion of our natural habitat.

“Due to its bright yellow flowers Madagascan Fireweed is likely to be noticed by passing motorists.

“If you suspect you have seen Madagascan Fireweed please take note of the location and call Canberra Connect on 13 22 81. Taking a photo of the suspected plant may also help save time in confirming reports.”

Some pictures of Madagascan Fireweed are attached.

For more information about weeds visit [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)

Statement Ends

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Fireweed is a heavily branched daisy like plant. Photo: H. Rose



Fireweed flower showing 13 petals Photo: B. Trounce