

## More than a Chore: The pleasures of weed management in high amenity rural landscapes

Nicholas Gill

School of Geography and Sustainable Communities | Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research,  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong, New South Wales 2522, Australia

**Summary** Weed management by rural landowners is conventionally seen as a chore, as task that must be undertaken for reasons that include legal obligations, conforming to social norms, keeping neighbours happy, or meeting higher order property management goals. At best it may be a means to an end. Previous research has framed weed management as a burden; a factor in selling land, an unexpected obstacle to land use goals among newer landowners, an extra cost for graziers. Moreover, divergent weed management effort can represent a source of neighbourly friction.

An alternative is to consider weed management in terms of the processes of learning, struggle, care, and transition that owning and managing land embodies. This framing of weeds will be considered in terms of environmental weed management by amenity or

lifestyle-oriented rural land owners. Interviews and property walks with lifestylers in southern New South Wales suggest that management of weeds such as Lantana offers certain pleasures or benefits. Weeding is the vehicle by which they explore, learn about, and (sometimes literally) uncover their land. This process embodies and cements relations of care and potentially the knowledge and experience for managing landscapes that have been formed by almost two centuries of settlement, clearing, farming, effective abandonment, (often) weedy forest regrowth, and lifestyle 'resettlement'. More than just a chore or a means to higher land use goals, weed management is itself an activity that embodies and generates a range of positive, constructive, and normatively desirable outcomes.