

Dear Home Owner

As you will have guessed nearly all activity in the Trust land over the past two months has been around the clearing of alien vegetation, with selective maintenance of trails where necessary.

The operation kicked off with a detailed assessment of the alien spread (with thanks to Marian and Jenny for their efforts in identifying and mapping the areas most affected)



To date activity has been confined to the South side which is by far the most infested area and after 5 full days of the 5-man PGS team and a week of concentrated “pulling” by a team of 15 ladies managed by Lee Blasich (PGS part-owner) we are not quite half way to concluding the first round (north side to follow), with several follow-up exercises to come. These will initially be quarterly and then less frequently until we have rid ourselves of aliens – which is where we were prior to the fire.

Experience has shown that Black Wattle are “pullable” as they are individually rooted plants, whereas Blackwoods are generally shoots growing from lateral roots that spread over significant distances from the original mother tree, making them impossible to pull as they simply snap off and will re-grow, which requires either “foliage” spraying with herbicide or “lopping” and spot-poisoning the stem base, which is a lot more time consuming. So those of you who are out there helping with the clearing we suggest you concentrate on the Black Wattle.



*Black Wattle - individually rooted plants*



Our initial brief was to avoid herbicide if at all possible, however once the extent of the infestation became obvious after the rains, it was clear that we had no choice but to adopt a two-pronged approach – pulling Wattle and herbiciding (spraying dense patches of both species) or lopping and spot-poisoning scattered Blackwood, which is what we have been doing. The herbicide we use is Garlon which is effective against both species

and has a short “soil life” of 42 days, with minimal long-term effect on potential fynbos growth. In the case of dense patches of aliens nothing else is able to grow amongst them anyway.

We have also eliminated most of the Datura (Jimsonweed) which popped up all over the place, as well as some isolated patches of Blue-gums. The remainder will be dealt with in the near future.

To put the task into perspective Lee’s team of 15 ladies filled +-120 refuse bags of aliens per day, or 600 bags for the week. The average number of plants per bag was 2,000 (you may well be surprised at the number, as we were, but after conducting our own bag-filling exercise Jen and I can verify it’s accuracy!). This means that the ladies pulled no less than 1,2 million (mostly) Black wattle plants in the week – and we are not yet half way. This does not include the scattered Blackwoods and dense patches of both species which are being herbicided.



Costs to date are in the region of R40,000 and our estimate is that a further R60k - R80k will need to be spent on this initial phase. We are in touch with the various authorities/initiatives dealing with alien eradication, however they are in the initial planning stages of their various programs and may be able to help in the future, by which time we will have an unmanageable forest, so we will soldier on ourselves for the moment and will welcome any help we can muster in the future.

As the festive season is upon us all our workers are enjoying a well-earned break and so peace has returned and our trails are there for you to enjoy. Please note that the Leopard trail is not in operation yet as it suffered a lot of damage and will take a little while to rehabilitate.

From the four of us (Alan, Bob, Pierre and myself) we wish you all a great festive season and a happy and healthy 2018.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dion", with a horizontal line underneath it.

WBPVRT

