

Major Weed Hits Riddells Creek - Carpet Weed (*Galenia pubescens*)

This is a really serious weed. Sunbury is covered in it and it has now reached Riddells Creek. Like any serious weed, if it takes hold it has the potential to wreck remnant vegetation sites and has the potential to devalue property, or at the very least turn away some potential buyers (I know I wouldn't buy a property covered in this stuff).

We've been looking for it for a while and the first plant was noticed on Riverside Drive last Summer. This plant was removed by Narelle. Then I noticed a number of plants appearing on Sutton Street this spring while walking to the Primary School. Last week I looked again and there are now about 30 plants there. In the past week or so we've done a minor survey of a few streets and found a few more plants speckled across Riddells Creek (eg. two small infestations along the length of the bitumen section of Sandy Creek Road, three along one section of Somerville Road, three along Gap Road, one in the Primary School, lots on the corner of Main St and Station St, and lots on Merrifield St).

It is hard to say how it is getting here but most likely via seed carried by vehicle tyres. It is then probably spread by human activity, the most obvious probable causes being the mains gas installations and mowing. If it ever gets to dirt roads it will be spread very quickly by graders with terrible consequences (like happened with Panic Veldt Grass on Gap Rd).

Its distribution is still small enough for it to be stopped. Importantly, Round-Up doesn't kill it. If you find these plants, get a large bin bag, dig up the plants (making sure you get all of the large taproot) and place it immediately in the bin bag (don't wander around with the plant as you may spread seeds further). Since it will have already dropped seed where it is, it is likely to come up again in that spot in Spring. It is most important to dig up all plants next Spring before they can set seed again. Definitely do not mow them at this time of year.

Thanks to Reilly, we have posted a map at: riddellscreeksustainability.org.au/special/map/carpetweed/ We need as much help as possible to locate plants in Riddell. If you see one (even if you are not sure), upload the sighting onto this website – we will check it out.

For identification, see attached photos. It is the only plant around here with that distinctive folded leaf. To familiarise yourself, just go half way up Sutton Street and those lush-looking roundish ground covers on the roadside are Carpet Weed. There are a number of other groundcovers around that are native so it is important to get the ID correct. There is also another very widespread weed that it could be confused with (Wireweed) but Wireweed doesn't have the folded leaf. If you'd like me to show you some plants let me know.

If you have it in front of your property you are just unlucky. If you have an idea about how it got there let us know (eg. do you sometimes have cars parked there, any earthworks there in the past two years, etc). This would be useful to know. If you see me wandering around the streets of Riddell with my little yellow GPS in hand – give me a toot!

Russell Best



Above: *Galenia pubescens*. Inset – close up of flower and showing characteristic folded leaves.

Key features of Carpet Weed are:
Compact ground cover, 20-200cm diameter.
Folded leaves (see close-up picture above)
Small (5mm) white-pinkish flowers.



Two natives that can be confused with Carpet Weed:
(a) *Einadia nutans*, common in and around the Primary School grounds especially - Picture left. It has red

berries in Summer, leaves aren't folded and some leaves on every plant have distinctive lobes at the base of the leaf.

(b.) *Pultenaea pedunculata* - same shape/habit but close inspection shows thin, dark green leaves (and yellow pea flowers in Spring).



Also, Carpet Weed could be confused with the very widespread weed, *Polygonum aviculare* (Wireweed) - it has much smaller, 3mm, white flowers and habit quite open with spreading wire/arm-like stems; see picture left).