

## It's Foxglove Season!

It's that time of the year when foxgloves start to flower in full glory. They are magnificent and spectacular flowers! Newer foxglove varieties with showy long-lasting flowers in a range of colours, sold for home gardens, are often sterile and don't produce viable seed. But the older varieties – mostly purple but occasionally pink or white - have become a major environmental weed in Tasmania in recent years. If you see these foxgloves unexpectedly popping up on your rural property then BEWARE! These weedy plants are prolific seeders and can take over land at a truly alarming speed, leading to many years of expensive and time-consuming work. More than this, the foxglove is also a major health hazard to humans and most other animals. Touching the plant can lead to sickness, breathing the exudates from foxgloves (while slashing or brushcutting for example) can make you very unwell. Eating the plant can result in death.

Weedy foxgloves have spread explosively across Tasmania in recent years. The tiny seed is highly mobile, it blows in the wind, flows in water, and is often unknowingly transported on machinery, on footwear and clothing, and in the fur of animals. Foxgloves thrive when the soil is disturbed. So it's easy to understand that foxgloves can seemingly appear out of nowhere – and it's often not till they flower in summer with striking metre-tall purple spikes that we scratch our heads and say 'where did that come from?'

Seeing the impacts foxgloves are having locally, Mount Roland Land Care (MRLC) has made action on foxgloves a high priority. Foxgloves are flowering now on hundreds of acres of land on the foothills of Mount Roland, around Wilmot and in the Forth Valley. MRLC has very limited resources but is engaging contractors and enlisting volunteers to manage the very highest priority foxglove populations threatening Mount Roland. It is also providing coordination and management support to affected landholders. And doing what it can to raise the profile of the problem, both politically and in the local community.

Mount Roland Land Care has also established a Foxglove Hotline, where over the next few months you can report the location of weedy foxgloves you observe. From the reports gained, a map of Kentish foxglove populations will be produced, laying the foundations for a future, coordinated municipal foxglove management program.

Importantly, MRLC has also allocated funds to the management of the highest priority foxglove sites reported on the hotline anywhere within Kentish. What are the highest priority sites? Often times, these are the new sites, those places where foxgloves are appearing for the first time this year. If these foxgloves are controlled before they go to seed (typically February), it means that a small amount of work this year will prevent years and years of future work. A single foxglove plant can produce hundreds of thousands of seeds that remain viable for many years.

To report your sighting of foxgloves in Kentish, go to the Mount Roland Land Care's new web page, at [www.mountrolandlandcare.org.au](http://www.mountrolandlandcare.org.au) and fill out and submit the brief reporting form you will find there. On the web page you can also give support to the Group by becoming a member or making a donation. Your actions will not overcome the foxglove problem, but they may help to reduce a major threat to our environment and the health of our community, including our children, our companion animals, our farm animals and our native animals.