



Neem has been declared: what you need to know



Mature neem tree

Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) is now a declared weed under the *Weeds Management Act*.

What is neem and why is it being declared as a weed in the Northern Territory?

Neem is a fast growing tree that is rapidly establishing in Top End waterways including the Katherine River. Neem's high levels of seed production, extensive root systems and ability to regrow from suckers has enabled it to aggressively compete with native plants, even in healthy, intact environments.

The declaration has resulted from efforts of the Katherine Regional Weed Reference Group, who initially described the impacts of neem in the Katherine River Corridor to the Minister for Land Resource Management through the Northern Territory Weed Advisory Committee.

Where did neem come from?

Neem has been grown as a garden ornamental, for shade and for the production of azadirachtin, a broad spectrum insecticide.

How is neem spread?

Prior to this declaration neem had been available for sale from nurseries and plant wholesalers.

Once planted, a single mature neem tree can produce up to 50,000 seeds per year. These seeds are then spread by birds and bats that ingest the fruit. This has contributed to significant spread along waterways. Neem trees also produce suckers, which enable dense stands to develop.

What is the neem declaration classification?

Class B – growth and spread to be controlled;

Class C – not to be introduced to the NT.

Will I be fined if I don't comply with the new declaration?

Effective immediately, it is illegal to buy, sell or transport neem plants or seeds. No new plantings are permitted in the Northern Territory. Offenders will be prosecuted.

Will I be required to control existing neem trees on my property?

At the time of declaration of neem, the Minister also announced period of grace to ensure that people with existing mature neem trees on their property are not prosecuted. Instead, management efforts will be concentrated on preventing further neem spread and disallowing establishment in new areas.

Weed Management Officers will be working with landholders in areas currently unaffected by neem to increase awareness for early detection and control.

Should neem seedlings be controlled?

Yes, the control of neem seedlings, while they can be easily sprayed or manually removed, will stop thousands of neem trees reaching maturity.

Considerable effort will be placed on ensuring members of the public understand the broader impacts of neem and have the ability to recognise and treat neem in the early stages of growth.

If I suspect neem is in my garden how should it be controlled?

Suitable herbicides and application methods can be found in the Weed Management Handbook produced by Department of Land Resource Management. Weed Management Officers can also provide advice.

Need further information?

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