



We're in Nariel Valley and we bought it four years ago.

At that stage we had a lot of weeds, blackberry was a real problem back then.

We use this property for biodiversity conservation and for small-scale horticulture particularly hazelnuts. I love the landscape, the topography, the vegetation, the stream and the wildlife.

We were impacted by the bushfires on the 4th of January 2020. We lost our home and our shed and everything we owned and what we were looking forward to was the regeneration of the land over time. I think that's been thwarted by the invasion of weeds coming into the property. We wanted to eliminate blackberry as much as possible, to improve our biodiversity and to improve the habitat. We needed to look at how we were going to manage our blackberry and we set out by looking at developing a sort of overall weed strategy and then we started to target our infestations of blackberry, knowing that it would take many years to eliminate or reduce the amount of blackberry that was there.

Some of the things we've had to think about in our blackberry control planning is the type of topography that we're up against, we've got some fairly steep areas in the block. We've got a waterway, a very sensitive waterway and we've got some native species, native grasses that we would like to protect and not to kill at the same time. It's horses for courses, in large areas the best method is to spray where we come across it in the paddock a physical removal has proved to be very effective.

The North East Blackberry Action Group has provided assistance through provision of contractors to come periodically and spray blackberry on our property. I think the best assistance has been the material that's been provided by them, the black berry control manual and advice that we've received from various land care participants. We've been fortunate in that our neighbours have also seen blackberries as a pest that needs to be eradicated or at least managed and they've also participated in these land care management programs.

It's been uplifting at a social level because we're able to interact with like-minded people. The removal of blackberry has had significant biodiversity benefits we've been able to access areas and replant those areas with native shrubs and trees and grasses and they've done very well without being competed by the blackberry. Aesthetically it's great for the psyche and the fact that you feel as though you're managing the land better by not having those large infestations of blackberry out of control in your land.