



FACT SHEET

Crack willow *Salix fragilis*

ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT

Crack willows (*Salix fragilis*) are one of the worst weeds in Australia because of their ability to spread as well as their economic and environmental impacts.

They are a declared weed in Tasmania under the *Tasmanian Weed Management Act 1999* and are a Weed of National Significance.

Among other things, the problems caused by willows include:

- Willows spread their roots across the bed of watercourses, slowing the flow of water and reducing aeration. This, together with the amount of water willows use, damages stream health.
- Willows form thickets that divert water away from main watercourses, leading to an increased risk of flooding and erosion.
- Willow leaves create a flush of organic matter when they drop in autumn, reducing water quality and available oxygen, and directly threatening aquatic plants and animals.
- Willows tend to drop branches without warning, posing a significant public hazard. The fallen branches also increase the likelihood of additional debris being caught in waterways, causing localised flooding, bank erosion and potential damage to infrastructure.
- The replacement of native vegetation by willows reduces habitat and the diversity of land and aquatic native plants and animals.

HOBART RIVULET WILLOW CONTROL

Controlling willows to protect the natural environment requires a long-term, planned approach.

Most willows spread when stem fragments or twigs break off the main tree and grow new roots in water. Pieces can travel many kilometres before taking root at a new site. Removal of willows should start in the upper reaches of a catchment.

In 2020 the City of Hobart treated all willows in and along the Hobart Rivulet on council-owned land from 65 Strickland Avenue upstream to the last willow infestation on the rivulet.

The intention is to continue a staged removal of remaining willows from the upper catchment downstream as funding and budgets allow. Willows will be replaced with more desirable native species to provide habitat for local wildlife, improve water quality, ensure bank stabilisation and restore the riparian corridor.

Removal methods include cutting large trees as close to the ground as possible and removing all branches and debris from the site. The stump will be treated with an appropriate herbicide to prevent regrowth. The stump and roots will be left on site to help stabilise the stream bank until new native vegetation is established.

Ongoing monitoring and control of willow regrowth will be required for 3–5 years after the initial willow removal.

