

REPLACING CAMPHORS WITH FIGS



Strangler figs

Native fig trees can provide an excellent fast growing replacement of camphor laurels. When “strangler figs” are planted in the forks of branches or stumps above the height of browsing animals they can be a cheap form of replacement due to the fact that fencing around the tree is not usually required. *Mature “strangler” fig tree.*

Which species?

Native strangler fig trees most suitable include Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*), Small leaved Fig (*F. obliqua*), Port Jackson Fig (*F. rubiginosa*), Deciduous Fig (*F. superba* var. *henneana*), White Fig (*F. virens* var. *sublanceolata*) and Strangler Fig (*F. watkinsiana*) (Wallace 1981). They can be grown from seed, local cuttings or purchased from nurseries.

Not all fig species are strangler figs. Creek Sandpaper Fig (*F. coronata*) and Sandpaper Fig (*F. fraseri*) grow best in the ground.

Where to plant?

Strangler Figs can be planted in the fork of branches where there is a large enough depression to support the seedling and soil, in planter boxes (with some holes to allow roots to penetrate) in trees, or; in the stump of a hollow dead camphor laurel or other trees.



When planting in the fork of a tree it is often necessary to remove some smaller branches to increase the light available to the fig. Initial follow-up watering is generally required. Native fig trees can also be planted directly into the ground (however fencing protection is required from grazing animals etc.) as part of a clump planting with pioneer species such as wattles. Left “Strangler” Fig in a camphor laurel. Right “Fig planted in tree fork, with smaller branches cut away”



Considerations to kill Camphors before planting Figs

You may wish to treat the camphor with herbicide to kill it outright. It is important that you do this BEFORE you plant your fig, if the fig grows with a live camphor, if you treat the camphor after the fig has established growth you may also kill the fig, as roots are often intertwined and herbicide may be passed through both plants. After you treat the camphor laurel- wait at least 3-4 weeks, as the camphor oil released from the dying tree can also kill the fig. If you do not kill the camphor before planting your fig, it will just take a lot longer for it to strangle its weedy host. Camphors can be treated by drill and injection methods with neat herbicide. Contact the Landcare office for more information.

How to encourage your fig to grow?

Native fig trees can be fed regularly using slow-release fertiliser (or rotted cow manure when established) and require plenty of water and nutrients. In ideal conditions, strangler figs can take over their host within 15-20 years. Keep in mind a fig will generally grow a wider canopy, ensure that the camphor you have ‘figged’ is not too close to structures such as rooves, sheds or overhead wires.

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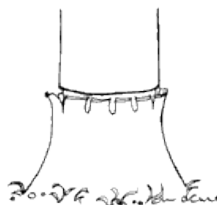
MANUAL CONTROL TECHNIQUES FOR CAMPHORS AND OTHER WOODY WEEDS

You may wish to treat the weed host for your fig before you plant. Consider safety issues first, a dead tree will eventually drop it's limbs, and sometimes pruning out larger branches as the tree is dying can reduce safety concerns. Otherwise fencing off the dying tree to reduce human/stock access may be required. Tree's overhanging buildings/roads/infrastructure should not be treated this way.

Drill and Inject- Stem Injection (Illustrations care of National Trust by V.Bear)

A method for weedy trees and large shrubs.

- Use a cordless drill (9 mm bit), hammer and chisel, or brace and bit.
- Below any branches, drill or chisel holes round the base of the tree, into the sapwood, angled down at 45°, and at 5 cm intervals all the way around the base of the tree
- Make the holes about 40 mm deep.
- Within a few seconds of drilling each hole, fill it with herbicide.
- Use this method only where falling branches will not be a safety hazard as the tree dies.
- Retreatment may be required
- This method can be used for coral trees, privet, camphors and other weed tree species



Frilling a woody weed (pic far left) with a small axe/tomahawk can also be used.

REGISTERED HERBICIDE	TREE SIZE	RATIO	RATE	COMMENTS
Glyphosate 360	Base diameter <25cm	1:1 water	2ml per cut (chisel/frill)	5cm cuts at 13cm centres
	Base 25cm-60cm	Undiluted	2ml per cut (chisel/frill)	5cm cuts at 13cm centres
	Any diameter	Undiluted	10ml per hole (drill)	1 hole every 7-10cm
Tordon DSH	Single stems <25cm	1:4 water	1ml per cut(chisel/frill)	Waist high 10-13cm centres Ground level 12-15cm centres
	Multiple stems or single stems >25cm at base	1:4 water	1ml per cut(chisel/frill)	Waist high 10-13cm centres Ground level 12-15cm centres

Basal Bark Method

Effective and quick to treat trees less than 10cm diameter. Simply clear grass and other vegetation around the base, paint with a long handled brush or using a sprayer (low pressure stream) spray the whole stem from around 30cm height all the way to the base, all the way around the stem:

Garlon 600	Up to 10cm diameter	1:60 diesel
Access	Up to 10cm diameter	1:60 diesel

Why are Camphors a Weed?

Like many introduced plants, Camphors have weedy characteristics including:

- Few natural predators or diseases that would normally keep tree numbers down
- Large production of viable seeds, able to germinate in shady and sunny conditions
- Regenerates via suckers and coppicing
- Seeds readily eaten and spread by birds
- Shallow roots that offer poor erosion protection to creekbanks and floodplains
- Invasive tree that dominates native vegetation and outcompetes them
- Easily establishes on cleared lands along fences, roads and river zones



The CLOC Lowland Rainforest Project on the Macleay is able to provide landholders Native Figs to plant into weed trees. We may also be able to supply herbicide if you wish to treat your woody weeds using methods detailed above. Contact Macleay Landcare on 6562 2076.

