What are Invasive Alien Plants (IAPs)?

Invasive Alien Plants are plant species introduced outside their natural range that spread aggressively and cause harm to water, soils, crops, grazing lands, infrastructure, or native biodiversity.
They often grow faster than native plants; spread quickly after disturbance (floods, fire, clearing) and form dense stands that block access to land and water.

Not all alien plants are harmful. Management should focus only on species that spread uncontrollably and cause damage in a specific place.



Why invasive alien plants are a problem



Less water access | Reduced grazing | Higher fire risk | Native plants decline

Why Invasive Alien Plants removal Matters

(Benefits for Farmers and Communities)



A. PROTECTS WATER AND SUPPORTS NATURE

- Removing invasive plants saves work, reduces costs, and makes land safe for everyone.
- **Maintains natural water flow:** improves water quality and availability and reduces long-term management costs.
- **Supports nature:** enables native plants and wildlife to recover.

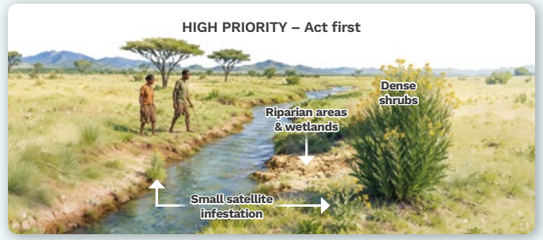


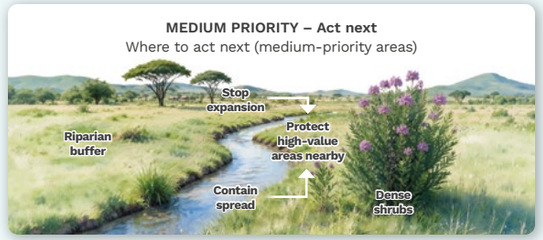
B. PROTECTS LAND AND COMMUNITIES

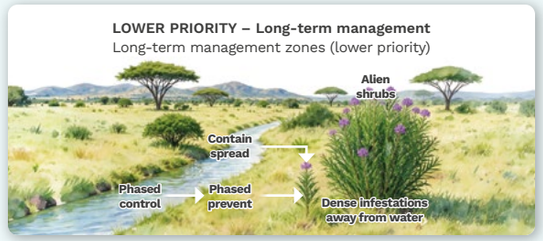
- Removing invasive plants saves work, reduces costs, and makes land safe.
- **Restores soil health:** improves farming, grazing and forestry outcomes and reduces long-term management costs.
- **Supports nature:** enables native plants and wildlife to recover and strengthens ecosystem resilience.

Where should IAP removal be prioritised?

Start where action brings the greatest benefit and reinvasion can be managed.

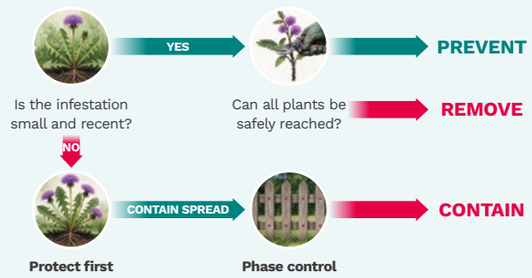






Decide the Right Action: Prevent, Remove, or Control

Before acting, ask three simple questions and choose the best pathway:



ATTEMPTING FULL REMOVAL WITHOUT FOLLOW-UP OFTEN FAILS AND INCREASES FUTURE COSTS

Step-by-Step: How to Practice IAP Removal

Step 1: Engage the Community

ACTIVITY: COMMUNITY MEETINGS

- Meet with all land and resource users.
- Share information on impacts and benefits.
- Discuss how the invasive plant is currently used (fuel, fodder, fencing).



Step 2: Walk, Map, and Mark the Area

RECORD:

- Infestation size and density.
- Distance to water or infrastructure.
- Slope, access, and disturbance history.



Step 3: Choose the Right Removal Method



Step 4: Protect Regenerating Trees

Protect young shoots from the three main threats:



YOUNG SHOOTS SURVIVE AND GROW WHEN RULES ARE RESPECTED.

When Is the Best Time to Remove Invasive Plants?

Timing depends on species and climate, but general rules apply:

- Before flowering and seed set.
- During active growth phases.
- During active growth phases.
- When access is safe and soil loss can be controlled.
- Avoid floods, heavy rain or strong winds.



USE LOCAL KNOWLEDGE TO REFINE TIMING.

After Removal: Prevent Re-Invasion

Healthy vegetation reduces the chance of invasive plants returning



A. PROTECT SOIL AND WATER

- Protect natural regrowth where possible.
- Plant native species only if recovery is slow.
- Do not leave large areas of bare soil.
- Use branches, mulch, or ground cover.
- Stabilise banks and slopes.

B. ENCOURAGE NATIVE RECOVERY

- Protect natural regrowth where possible.
- Plant native species only if recovery is slow or absent.

Community Roles in Invasive Plants Removal

FARMERS
Support with IAP removal, and protect native species



FIELD OFFICERS
Link communities, support rules, resolve conflicts, coordinate protection, train on train on IAP identification, removal and native species protection/restoration



COMMUNITY LEADERS
Support rules.



What NOT to Do in Invasive Plants Removal (Common Mistakes)



Monitoring & Maintenance Checklist

Do this every 3-6 months:


Remove seedlings & resprouts


Check for soil erosion


Check for new invasion


Check for new pathways


Act communities & field officers

REGULAR CHECKS PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT & NATURE

Community Success Indicators



Quick Training Exercise for community, led by a field officer or community champion (15 Minutes)

Take community members for a walk to visit an infested site.

Ask: “Who uses this place, and how?”.

Ask: “Which plants belong here? Which ones spread too much?”

Stand where everyone can see/identify invasive and native plants clearly.

Identify

Discuss how the invasion spread.

Look at water paths, livestock routes, roads, or disturbed soil.

Ask: “How do you think these plants arrived and spread here?”

Demonstrate safe removal of one plant.

Explain why roots matter and why follow-up is needed.

Agree on next monitoring date.

“We start small, remove fully, and return to check.”

“Success comes from early action, shared rules, and regular follow-up.”

Handling Conflicts Fairly

Invasive plant removal can affect access to land, resources, and livelihoods, so conflicts may arise. Fair and transparent conflict management helps protect ecosystems while strengthening community unity.

- **Share information openly:** Why removal is needed
- Document agreements clearly
- Involve all user groups in decisions
- Follow community by-laws and agreed rules
- Use neutral mediators when needed
- Encourage respectful dialogue

Who to Contact for Help

Local environmental or forestry agencies: District Forestry Officers, Zambia Environmental Management Agency – ZEMA.

Agricultural extension services: Ministry of Agriculture extension officers at district, block, or camp level

Conservation NGOs

Community leaders or resource committees

Site-specific guidance

WHAT TO DO

- Start in dry season
- Cut plants near the ground
- Treat stumps with herbicide
- Stack cut material away from water
- Inform & engage local community



WHAT NOT TO DO

- Burn infestations
- Spray into water
- Clear during floods
- Delay follow-up




THORNY SHRUB

Can spread quickly across wetlands

KEY FIELD RULE: DO NOT START REMOVING *M. pigra* UNLESS FOLLOW-UP IS GUARANTEED

The Nature Conservancy

Community Practical Field Guide for Invasive Alien Plant (IAP) Removal



PROTECTION • RESTORATION • MANAGEMENT