

# Statewide call to bust weed pests

IT'S that time of the year again — a week when Queensland communities have the chance to come together to fight for our right to be free of weeds.

Weedbuster Week — from September 6 to 12 — provides an opportunity to practice weed prevention and early detection — the theme for this year's event.

Biosecurity Queensland senior biosecurity officer, Petra Skoien said people were asked to get involved in the week by busting weeds around their local community.

"If you care about your environment and want to help tackle this serious problem, sign up for one of the activities happening over

Weedbuster Week or register your own event," Ms Skoien said.

"Whether you're a local resident, a student, landcare group or grazier, why not register an event, activity or display in your region to help raise awareness of weeds and their impacts?"

"It's easy to register and find out more information — just head to [www.weedbusterweek.info.au](http://www.weedbusterweek.info.au) to get involved, and to also receive your organisers kit."

Dr Skoien said it was important everyone played a responsible role in environmental sustainability, making the necessary changes in behaviour to help the environment.

"Weeds cost Queensland an

estimated \$600 million annually and have significant impacts on industries, natural ecosystems, and human and animal health," she said.

"On a larger scale, they cost the Australian economy \$4 billion every year in lost agricultural production.

"By getting involved in a Weedbuster Week activity, you will be helping to reduce these impacts, and maintain a clean, green and safe environment that Australians are so fortunate to have."

Dr Skoien said one of the most cost-effective ways to control weeds was to stop them spreading and to eradicate new infestations.

"Don't give weeds free reign in your backyard or in your town."



Lantana — one of the weeds to be targeted during Weedbuster Week in September.

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## Working in the dark with photosynthesis

By **KEN BALLAMY**

INFRA-RED light can penetrate soil.

We often think of photosynthesis as happening in the daylight hours, but some bacteria use infra red light for photosynthesis.

This means photosynthesis can be active even in what we think is darkness.

Provided there are enough phototrophic or photosynthetic bacteria and other organisms, which can accept non-visible light, photosynthesis can go on 24 hours a day.

In the dark, the solar panels operated by plants don't work.

This means sugar production has to slow down and plants even lose some carbon at night during respiration.

To help with this, plants make friends with a community of microbes containing photosynthetic bacteria and even trade them sugars and other substances for special energy compounds, which I call photon packs, when there are enough of them present.

These photon packs help plants

make sugar. This means that plants can share in a second wave of photosynthesis outsourced to soil organisms, when these organisms are present in numbers.

Increased overall photosynthetic activity results in greater capture of carbon dioxide from the air, greater sugar production and better biomass growth all round.

As long as the right microbes are present around a plant, sugar production can happen day or night, light or dark, just as it does on the dark and shady floor of a rainforest, or deep in the ocean.

Build the microbes, share their photon packs, and photosynthesis happens, even in the dark.

(Ken Bellamy is the director of Townsville-based biotech company Vital Resource Management — [enquiries@vrms.com.au](mailto:enquiries@vrms.com.au) — established in 1997 to offer sustainable and affordable improvements in water management and food production. He is also a director of Prime Carbon, set up in 2004 to help assess and register farm-based carbon offsets.)

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