



Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter Issue 40 May 2019



## Greetings,

The merry month of May opens the 2019 season and *All Fired Up* features advice and reminders to help make this one the quietest ever!

We extend our best wishes for a safe season to the air and ground crews; this time of year is a worrying time for their families as well. Let's all pull together to make the LEFPA region a low-risk zone.

Until next time.



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## Big Ups to Mpumalanga Disaster Management



LEFPA is enormously grateful to the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC) which, via MUFPA, has made Mass Mobilisation Equipment available for use. The equipment was placed at strategic sites within the FPAs in the province.

Should the mobilisation of additional resources to an area be required during the forthcoming fire season, provisions have been placed at Lekwa FPA, Mkhondo FPA, Umpiluzi FPA, PAFPA and LEFPA. PDMC has provided shelters, tents, mattresses as well as gel stoves which the FPAs will use during fire awareness programmes held prior to the fire season. Thank you PDMC!

## We Need YOU!

Your feedback and input on *All Fired Up* is key to LEFPA publishing a monthly newsletter filled with content you find useful, informative and interesting.

It's been two years since our last revamp and we want to know whether it's time to introduce a new format and layout and if we are actually delivering what you want to read.

With this in mind, we've created an electronic survey for our members; it's simple enough. Click the link below to participate in the survey and let us know how and where we can improve *All Fired Up*. It is, after all, your newsletter; your input is vital to its relevance. We've made it as simple and user-friendly as possible but if there is more that'd you'd like to tell us, please do! Email [manager@lefpa.co.za](mailto:manager@lefpa.co.za) and share your ideas and suggestions with Andre. LEFPA would really appreciate your spending a few minutes giving us your feedback. We're *All Fired Up* to improve your newsletter!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GY8GDYZ>



## Keep An Eye On This Interesting Fire Watch Website

You may have already checked out Global Forest Watch Fires (GFW Fires), but if you haven't, the link to this online platform for monitoring and responding to forest and land fires using near real-time information is below. GFW Fires combines real-time satellite data from NASA's Active Fires system, high resolution satellite imagery, detailed maps of land cover and concessions for key commodities such as palm oil and wood pulp, weather conditions and air quality data to track fire activity and related impacts in the South East Asia region.

<https://fires.globalforestwatch.org/report/index.html#aoitype=GLOBAL&reporttype=globalcountryreport&country=South%20Africa&aois=Mpumalanga&dates=fYear-2019!fMonth-1!fDay-1!tYear-2019!tMonth-4!tDay-16>

**GLOBAL  
FOREST  
WATCH  
FIRES**

# Alien Invasive Plants - No Cheering These Pom Poms

**IAP Species:** *Campuloclinium macrocephalum*

**Common names:** Pom pom weed

**Nemba Category:** 1b

## **Description:**

A tall erect perennial herb with pink fluffy flower heads and leaves concentrated on the base of the plant. *Bark:* Green to purple covered with rough bristly hairs. *Leaves:* Light green with serrated margins and lance-shaped, becoming small and more distant upwards. *Flowers:* Pink and produced in dense clusters at the end of aerial stems; flower-head consists of hundreds of tiny, star shaped florets surrounded by purple bracts. Flowers in late summer during December-March. *Fruit/Seeds:* Brown, one-seeded achenes.

## **Where does this species come from?**

Central & South America (Mexico to Argentina).

**Where in South Africa is it a problem?** Grassland regions of Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape Provinces.

**How does it spread?** It spreads easily by seed, and it can also regenerate from underground rhizomes.

**Why is it a problem?** It causes serious degradation of the veld, lowering the biodiversity and reducing the grazing capacity by being unpalatable to large herbivores.

## **Does the plant have any uses?**

Introduced for ornamental purposes but now a noxious weed.

## **Herbicidal control**

**Three herbicides are currently registered for use on pompom weed:**

1. Brush-Off (metsulfuron methyl 600 g/kg) made by DuPont. Brush-Off is a water dispensable granular herbicide for broad-leaf weed control. For pompom weed mix 25 g Brush-Off granules in 100 litres of water, or 2.5 g in 10 litres. BP Crop Oil is recommended as the wetting agent at 50 ml/10 litres water.
2. Access 240 (picloram 240 g/litre), by Dow AgroSciences, registered as a foliar treatment. It is recommended that 350 ml of Access be mixed with 100 litres of water, or 35 ml in 10 litres. The wetter Actipron Super must be added at a rate of 50 ml per 10 litres of spray mix.
3. Climax, metsulfuron methyl (sulfonyl urea) 600 g/kg, by Volcano Agrosience, also registered as a foliar treatment. The recommended dosage is 20g-30g / 100l water plus a surfactant, which could be either Volcano 90 at 100ml / 100l water, or BP Crop Oil at 500ml / 100l water. It should be applied either early summer, at the lower rate, or mid to late summer, using the higher rate.

## **Physical control methods**

Physical methods of control, such as uprooting or hoeing, are ineffective and make the problem worse through disturbance. It is not advisable to plough lands with pompom weed as this will damage the rootstock, stimulating further vegetative growth and denser stands. Spread of the plant can be limited by preventing seed production and aerial stems can be cut right back before the flowers produce seed. However, be warned that the plants will be stimulated to produce more stems and in order for this method to work the plants will have to be cut back several times until the end of the growing season.

Repeated cutting back of aerial growth should deplete nutrients stored in the roots, weaken the plant and limit the production of seed but this method is only practical on a small scale. It is advisable to remove all flower heads from the site, careful not to spread the weed further, and dispose by burning. In the case of single or very few pompom plants in an area, each plant can be dug up, taking care to remove the root crown (the area where the stem is attached to the swollen, finger-like roots) from the soil. Once the root crown has been removed, the roots will apparently not regrow. It is important to cause as little soil disturbance as possible, in order to prevent the mass-germination of pompom seeds. Regular follow-up visits to the site for the next three growing seasons are essential to ensure that all seedlings have been removed.

## **Biological control**

Biological control research (introducing, testing and releasing host-specific natural enemies of pompom weed) is underway at ARC-PPRI's weed laboratories at Cedara (near Pietermaritzburg, KZN). The project leader is Dr Andrew McConnachie (e-mail: [McConnachieA@arc.agric.za](mailto:McConnachieA@arc.agric.za)). PPRI researchers have undertaken three exploration trips to Argentina and one to Brazil to survey for potential biological control agents of pompom weed in its natural habitat. One rust fungus and nine insect species have been brought back to South Africa where they have been submitted for taxonomic identification. Only three of the insect species and the rust fungus (*Puccinia eupatorii*) are currently being reared and tested in quarantine. The insects include a stem-galling thrips (*Liothrips* sp.) and two flower-feeding lepidopterans (*Cochylis campuloclinium* and *Adaina prob. simplicius*).

Once researchers have satisfied themselves that these candidate biocontrol agents are host-specific and therefore safe for release, as well as significantly damaging to pompom weed, applications for permission to release the agents will be lodged with two government departments (Department of Agriculture and Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism). All of these stages are time consuming, and it will probably be several years before any agents can be released.

Meanwhile a damaging rust fungus - a different strain to the one imported by PPRI - was found on pompom weed in Gauteng. Nothing is known yet about its entry into the country, but laboratory studies on this accidentally-introduced pathogen are in progress.

## **References**

Management of Invasive Alien Plants. [www.arc.agric.za/arc-ppri/Pages/Pompom%20weed/Management-and-control-.aspx](http://www.arc.agric.za/arc-ppri/Pages/Pompom%20weed/Management-and-control-.aspx). Invasive Species of South Africa - *Campuloclinium-macrocephalum*. [www.invasives.org.za/component/k2/item/203-pom-pom-weed-campuloclinium-macrocephalum](http://www.invasives.org.za/component/k2/item/203-pom-pom-weed-campuloclinium-macrocephalum).



# Preparing for the Fire Season - Planning Ahead

According to Benjamin Franklin, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” while United States Speaker Nancy Pelosi urges people to “organise, don’t agonise.” Any landowner who has suffered a fire on his property knows full well the agony wrought by calamity and LEFPA can’t emphasize enough the importance of planning and preparation with regards to fire protection.

By now, members should have completed their trace belts and be preparing to burn firebreaks around homesteads and Eskom servitudes. Each issue of *All Fired Up* has an easy-to-follow monthly planner on the back page to guide you through the month’s task list and remember, LEFPA is only an email or phone call away should you need advice or assistance; we are here for YOU so please use us!

While we have your attention, here is a list of preparations that you should have well in hand by now.

1. Trace belts prepared by chemically spraying two lines where your firebreaks will go, wait for the grass between the lines to die off and then burn,
2. Check fire beaters, are handles securely fastened to the flails? Handles must be at least 2 metres long,
3. Check rake hoes - ensure the handles are at least 2 metres long,
4. Check hoses and connections on knapsack pumps,
5. Check knapsack straps and nozzles,
6. Service bakkie sakkie engines, check hoses, couplings, pumps, reels, nozzles,
7. Keep useful items such as wire cutters, pliers, cable ties, bottles of water and anything else you think will be useful on the fireline in the vehicle,
8. Ensure staff and workers are equipped with PPE in excellent condition.

Read [www.safeforestryonline.co.za/articles/fire-equipment-check-list/](http://www.safeforestryonline.co.za/articles/fire-equipment-check-list/)

Contact LEFPA for a copy of the Minimum Rules and Requirements or download here:

<http://www.lefpa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Draft-11-A5-size-LEFPA-Minimum-Rules-Requirements-2017-Version-SEP.pdf>



## International Firefighter Day 4th May

Firefighters come in all shapes and forms and while many firefighters suppressing blazes in the LEFPA area are not full time professionals, their bravery and physically demanding effort wins our respect every time. It’s hazardous work, often called upon at the end of a hard day’s work and well into their much-deserved ‘off duty’ time.

These men and women both in the air and on the ground give everything they’ve got to both prevent and to suppress fires that threaten property, livestock and human life. On occasion, one of the brave has tragically made the ultimate sacrifice.

It’s only right that once a year, we respectfully nod our heads to these brave people and remember those we’ve lost. Don’t forget their families either. The worry and anxiety suffered by parents, spouses and children every time a fire breaks out in the area is real.

International Firefighter Day is symbolised by red and blue ribbons - red for fire, blue for water.

**Siyanidumisa.**



## Mankele Challenge - LEFPA Wins Again!

Proving that they go the distance and last year's win was no flash in the pan, the LEFPA team took the honours for the second year in a row for Best Water Point and Team Spirit at the SAPPI MTB Mankele Challenge on 16th March.

It's always down to the team members themselves, and LEFPA is proud of Queen Khoza, Buzi Mkhonto, Goodman Madonsela, Nomcebo Mlotywa and Ivina Alberts for a job well done. Thanks for holding the LEFPA flag high and making us proud, guys.



L to R: Queen, Buzi, Goodman, Nomcebo

## Making Light Work

Many hands make light work and a recent collaboration in the Crocodile River Mountain Conservancy Mara area did just that. A large fire in the Conservancy 18 months ago stimulated the vegetation, including invasive species, to return with a vengeance. A project initiated by the Conservancy, TRAC N4 Toll Route and LEFPA Mbombela Team cleared the road verge on the northern side of the tar, which will also act as a fire break. With funding from TRAC to clear 4 kms and a section of weed control, due to the generous support from LEFPA and members of the Conservancy who supplied staff, chainsaws, herbicide and spraying equipment much more was achieved. In total, 4.5 kilometres were cleared, burnt and herbicide applied with 1.5km sprayed and burnt while a further kilometre was pruned.



Professor Kevin Balkwill, Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Science at the University of the Witwatersrand wrote an extremely appreciative article for the Conservancy, pointing out the environmental significance and importance of managed firebreaks and the value of the clean up. Without the generous financial contribution of TRAC, this would not have been possible and the Conservancy is hugely grateful to both TRAC and LEFPA for their support.



## Activities for the Month - May

- Get airstrips operational.
- Activate manual lookouts.
- Start using readiness checklist.
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Ensure all your roads graded or slashed.
- Prepare firebreaks around homesteads.
- Ensure all fire-related training is completed.
- Develop an all-risk prevention plan for each risk.
- Ensure that all-risk action plan is fully implemented.
- Burn open areas on rotational burning programmes.
- Issue Personal Protective Equipment to all your fire crews.
- Ensure your fire-fighting vehicles comply with LEFPA standards.
- Make sure that all staff are familiar with LEFPA's response plan.
- Remind all your staff of the dangers of warming fires, smoking, etc.
- Commence firebreak burning (ensure Eskom servitudes are burnt).
- Make sure that all your fire crews have been for their annual medical check-up.



### Important Note:

- **The 2019 Annual General Meeting will be held in the LEFPA Boardroom 13 June at 10h00. Please diarise to attend. As mentioned in the March issue, new Board members for the 2019 / 2022 term will be elected at the meeting.**
- Basic Firefighting Training is available to LEFPA members. Interested parties can contact the LEFPA office.
- FDI weather emails and SMSs are available to LEFPA members, contact Ivina for more information.
- **SUCCESS cannot be spelt without U. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!**



## LOWVELD AND ESCARPMENT FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION



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### 2019 BURNING PROHIBITIONS

#### IN TERMS OF CHAPTER 7 OF THE NATIONAL VELD AND FOREST FIRE ACT 101 OF 1998 LOWVELD AND ESCARPMENT FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION DAFF REGISTRATION NUMBER 871/01/October 2004

The **Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association (LEFPA)** hereby objects to any burning operations within the Associations boundaries without a valid burning permit in terms of National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998 Article 25(3) (a)(b)(c)

That, within the boundaries of the LEFPA and the Ehlanzeni District, no person shall from **1 June 2019 up to and including 31 October 2019** make a fire in the open air, or, if such a fire has been made, allow it to continue to burn or add fuel thereto, otherwise than:

- fires made within a demarcated picnic or camping area or caravan park, or holiday resort, but only at places within such an area which have been specifically prepared and maintained for that purpose; provided that such fires are properly extinguished with water and/or sand;
- fires for the preparation of food on residential stands;
- fires made on residential and industrial stands in proclaimed townships;
- fires made for initiation school purposes, but only at places which have been specially prepared and maintained for that purpose to prevent fires from spreading.

That, within the boundaries of LEFPA and the Ehlanzeni District, no person shall from **1 June 2019 up to and including 31 October 2019** destroy by burning slash originating from any timber plantation or self-sown exotic trees and or alien invasive plants.

That, within the boundaries of LEFPA and the Ehlanzeni District, no person shall from **1 June 2019 up to and including 31 October 2019** destroy by burning residue, cultivated crop fields and veld, clear or maintain a fire belt by burning or execute block burns, unless a burning permit has been obtained from LEFPA.

That in terms of Chapter 7, Article 25 of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998, persons found guilty of offences will be subject to a minimum fine of **R5 000.00**.

Burning Permits are subject to LEFPA Rules & Minimum Requirements (Version 8 April 2017) and any other relevant By-Laws with in your Local Municipality.

LEFPA recommends that all burning operations should be completed by **1 August 2019** weather permitting.

**Contact Details for Burning Permits: 013 752 6419 or 0860 66 3473**

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**March 2019**



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**April 2019**

