

Case study

Hard work paying off at The Leap

PCL visited Shanna Souvlis and Alex Josephson's 10 acre block of bush and rainforest at The Leap as part of the first year of the Mackay Regional Pest Management Group's Peri-urban Project. Shanna and Alex aim to improve the biodiversity and habitat value of their entire block, focusing on the rainforest riparian vegetation of the creek line running through their block, to connect with rainforest patch on the upper part of their block. In Shanna's words:

Our plans to improve the condition of our small acreage are twofold - removing weeds without using any chemicals, and revegetation. We have so many varieties of weeds it's scary, from the usual lantana and guinea grass, to huge stands of Mother-in-laws tongue. Manual removal followed by planting well and lots of TLC afterwards, has proved very successful. It's a lot of work now but we are already seeing good results. We get a lot of extra pleasure knowing that we haven't used any poisons.

The pair has been very active in managing pest species, achieving a tremendous amount in less than 18 months on the property. They have killed and mulched vast quantities of Lantana, removed invasive landscaping plants and started to control annual weeds, all without the use of chemicals. A major challenge for the couple will be managing pests across fence lines, and coming to agreements with neighbours that enable this to happen.

Shanna and Alex have also been very busy planting trees to increase the biodiversity of their block. They have planted over 200 locally-native trees, creepers and grasses. Shanna says that maintaining the plants over the long period without rain that the region has experienced this year has been a lot of hard work.

The couple's efforts have been assisted through their participation in the 'Willing Workers on Organic Farms' program. In this program landholders host visitors from Australia and overseas who work on their property in exchange for hospitality. As both Alex and Shanna work off-farm during the week, it helps to have additional help to make progress towards the rehabilitation and management of the property.

Through the Peri-urban project, PCL delivered the site-specific information that Shanna and Alex were searching for, building their capacity for on-ground pest and native vegetation management. PCL identified declared pest species and garden plants with potential to become invasive, with assistance from Land for Wildlife's Peter Alden, who contributed his expertise. In addition to weed identification and control advice, PCL could assess the suitability of strategies for vegetation management and identify other issues and risks for the property.

Information delivered during the site visit was compiled and developed into an inclusive property management plan, including an action plan setting out priority actions to undertake on the property over coming years. This plan, provided in conjunction with a Landholder Information Pack, will help Shanna and Alex achieve their aims for the property whilst ensuring that they meet their responsibilities as rural landholders.

PCL looks forward to visiting Shanna and Alex' on their lovely property again soon, to see what transformations they are achieving through their hard work and vision.

The Peri-urban Project is a two year project, funded through Queensland Government's Blueprint for the Bush program. It is being delivered across the Mackay-Whitsunday region by the Mackay Regional Pest Management Group, through the region's three catchment Landcare groups.
