



## Reitz Tree Care cc

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### Insights from RTC on post fire activity in the burnt landscape

The general trend to 'rehabilitate the natural landscape' after fire raises the following concerns:

1. Mechanical disturbance (such as walking) of previously undisturbed zones. This is one way to introduce alien plant species. Where alien plant seed occurs, germination takes place to a greater degree after surface disturbance such as trampling, pulling weeds or planting/cultivating.
2. Potential damage to extensive soil stabilizing Bryophytic and Mycorrhizal networks across the now accessible landscape whilst in it's exposed state.
3. Cutting down of 'bush' (in particular *Searsia lucida*) that has visibly brown leaves due to the fire's heat. This is merely scorched and remains unburnt. Birds will still benefit from these potential refuge 'pockets' and these plants could coppice at a higher point on their stems.

I urge you to remain patient and avoid haphazardly trying to 'rehabilitate the damaged landscape' outside of your regular gardening zone/property.

Imagine the microscopic world of underground root zones accounts for say 50% of the whole living plant material kingdom. This zone would remain largely unaffected even after fire.

Presume that the landscape is intact with only the surface layers burnt and transformed.

In a relatively short time above ground plant material will manifest itself cell by living cell in a wave of proportionate revival.

Effective, unobtrusive action aimed at alien seedling control needs ample discussion to arrive at an intelligent solution. Walking around looking for seedlings will cause unnecessary damage. This action could take place once the natural bush, ground covers and the infinite interactive dance of chemistry have had a chance at recapturing their niche and are visibly growing.

These insights do not apply to previously disturbed/alien infested areas.



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### Plett Solar Beach Group

#### Group scientific authorities to endorse

##### After the fire

- A. Old Acacia cyclops rarely coppices after fire...so don't pull it out by roots unnecessarily. Only cut down A.cyclops plants within urban yards.
- B. Do not walk over, drive on or disturb in any way the natural dune areas.
- C. Fire has a transforming effect and results in huge release of nutritional energy. Ash does not need to be cleared away. It will blow around but it is not 'dirty' and is a natural fertiliser. It should be tolerated until it is washed away by rain or naturally disappears.

Post fire activities should be kept to a minimum. It is suggested that very little activity take place after the fire and a wait and see approach is advised.

Root systems, moss and lichens occur under dune vegetation and this dune stabilising plant material is mostly at a fibrous level of unicellular thickness, usually invisible to most eyes. This is under the ash and any disturbance of the burnt area will result in existing root systems and microsystems being damaged. This will lead to wind erosion. The ash which is beneficial to plant growth will move with a bit of rain but will settle in the dune slacks and will encourage dune thicket revival.

As mentioned, there will be a release of nutritional energy after the fire.

Dunes do not erode by water, being naturally very porous.

Burnt trees which are still standing will create wind breaks which 'collect' particulate matter out the air and a degree of shade for the understorey microclimate. They also enable vines that form such an integral part of dune vegetation (*Rhoicissus* spp.) to climb and advance the evolution of these microclimates. The contrast of burnt vegetation with new burgeoning green growth can be charming in its character once one has considered its value within the above-mentioned process.