



Herbicide-wiping tool

The tool that HFNC adapted (by fitting small pads cut from kitchen sponges to the rubber cups) is a “**Pick up – Reaching Tool**” obtained from *The Reject Shop* (imported by TRS Trading Group, 245 Racecourse Rd, Kensington, Vic 3031). We fixed the pads to the cups with a thick wool thread, after drilling 4 holes near the edge of the rubber cups. The pads are then trimmed to size and shape.

The tool has a pistol grip and trigger to operate the jaws. It is cheap (\$3), lightweight, strong, easy to use and very effective since both sides of the leaf or stem are contacted. Simply grasp the plant near the base and lift. No bending is required and many thousand plants can be treated quickly without strain to the back or hands. The tool can also be used to dab the leaves of garden escapees such as *Oxalis purpurea*.

The pads are dipped into a container that holds the herbicide-wetter-dye mixture. We use plastic containers that originally held produce (honey or rice), obtained from supermarkets. The opening of the container need not be great but must allow the pads to be inserted (use the trigger to press the pads together to allow this, then releasing the trigger to allow the springs to enter). Drill a hole in the centre of the container lid to attach it to the container by a cord, so that it can be closed for transport.

Sparaxis, Cape Tulip, African Weed Orchid, Wild Gladiolus or other weeds of similar structure are individually wiped with a concentrated herbicide solution (*Metsulfuron methyl*, 1 g/ L, *Glyphosate* 50 mL/ L, surfactant 5 mL/ L, dye 5 mL/ L) using this tool to deliver herbicide to the pest plant without contacting other vegetation. Glyphosate may be left out if the situation is such that the chemical cannot be used (no Chemical Users Permit is needed for *Metsulfuron Methyl*) or there are certain species (e.g. most native grasses) that would be affected. Note that solutions of *Metsulfuron methyl* will probably be inactive if stored more than a day, so only prepare a small volume (e.g. 1 L) for immediate use.

The objective of herbicide-wiping is to kill all of the pest plants without killing adjacent native species. Broad-scale spraying of Cape Tulip cannot do that. Nor does it actually kill all of the Cape Tulip plants in the spray area because these plants are difficult to hit with spray and the stem/leaf surface does not wet easily. The same applies to many other bulbous species, such as Wild Gladiolus. However, all of the native species are killed by spray, thus creating a vast amount of bare ground that grows only Cape Tulip and other weeds in the following year.