

Backyard Buddies

Your monthly guide to animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds



Witches' broom on Jacksonia with visiting weevil.
Photo credit: Liz Edwards



Fasciation on Templetonia. Photo credit: Liz Edwards

That's so weird!

Plant abnormalities have interested botanists and gardeners alike for many years. There are numerous kinds of strange growths in plants, but the same abnormality can have various causes. Below are just a few examples of fairly common plant abnormalities.

Witches' broom is a symptom of stress in woody plants resulting in a deformed mass of twigs and branches, which looks broom-like in appearance. Causes include insect pests, viruses, fungi, environmental factors and genetic mutations.

Fasciation appears as abnormal flattened, ribbon-like, crested or elaborately contorted tissue in vascular plants. Causes include hormonal, genetic, bacterial, fungal, viral and environmental factors

Phyllody is the abnormal development of the leaf tissue caused by viral infections or environmental factors resulting in an imbalance in the plant hormones.

Chimera is the result of a genetic mutation. The overall appearance of fruit can be changed and sections of the rind or skin can appear striped and/or green. Leaf mutation produces variegated or misshapen or completely white leaves.

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Control

There is not much that can be done other than to keep plants as healthy as possible, allowing them to fight off pests and diseases. These weird and somewhat wonderful malformations can be a good talking point but if you don't want them on your plants you can simply remove the affected parts. Use disinfected equipment so as not to spread any diseases.

We would love to see photos of any weird and wonderful growths!

You can send them to us by making an online report (mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au), or using the MyPestGuide™ Reporter app. Alternatively you can contact our Pest and Disease Information Service.

You can also help protect your garden by reporting any unfamiliar or unusual pests, weeds or diseases. All reports arrive with us at Agriculture and Food, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.



Phyllody on strawberry. Photo credit: Liz Edwards



Chimera on an orange. Photo credit: Michael Skivinis