

Lantana

Lantana camara var. *aculeata*

Family

Verbenaceae (teak, verbena, puriri)

Also known as

Lantana scabrida, *Camara vulgaris*, wild sage, red-flowered sage

Where is it originally from?

Tropical America

What does it look like?

Smelly scrambling evergreen shrub (<4-5 m) with woody taproot with laterals that sucker when broken. Young stems are 4-angled, hairy and prickly, and older stems are rounded, woody, much branched, and brittle. Hairy, ovalish leaves (3-9 cm long) in opposite pairs along the stems, very wrinkled, and have toothed edges. Conspicuous flat flower heads (2-3 cm across, all year round) with many tiny tubular flowers, each cream, yellow, orange, pink, red, purple or mixtures of these, changing colour as they mature, are followed by small, clustered, berry-like fruits, green ripening to juicy purple-black, contain one small pale seed per fruit.

Are there any similar species?

Other *L. camara* cultivars and crosses. *Lantana montevidensis* is low growing or prostrate, has smaller leaves and purple or white flowers, and is occasionally weedy.

Why is it weedy?

Produces many, well-dispersed seeds, is long-lived, and forms dense thickets that exclude other species. It is also allelopathic (produce toxins that poison the soil around it) so other species cannot replace it. Extremely versatile in habitat preferences, preferring well drained soils and high rainfall but thriving in clay also. Tolerates drought, moderate shade, and fire, but is susceptible to hard frost. Poisonous (not grazed).

How does it spread?

Seeds are spread by birds, and suckering roots allow thickets to remain dense. Roots and seeds are spread in contaminated soil, dumped vegetation, and common sources are gardens, roadsides, and waste areas.

What damage does it do?

Totally smothers and replaces all other species on the ground, causing permanent loss of habitat.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Most low-growing plant communities, disturbed and regenerating bush in warmer regions, inshore islands, cliffs, gumlands, foreshores, and bush margins, especially in northern North Island.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Spray (best Nov-Dec): glyphosate (100ml/10L + penetrant).
2. Cut down and paint stump (all year round): glyphosate (200ml/L).
3. Dig out. Generally not recommended as roots resprout unless all fragments removed. Use only on small plants and where herbicides cannot be used. Leave on site to rot down.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Physical removal largely ineffective as root fragments sucker where broken. Cut stems resprout. Recovers well after fire. Reseeds in bared areas after spraying. Avoid root disturbance if possible when controlling. Check all treated sites for seedlings and suckers. Don't replant for two years after all plants destroyed. Seed longevity usually low. Replant with dense cover and constantly check for new seedlings.



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Photo: Trevor James

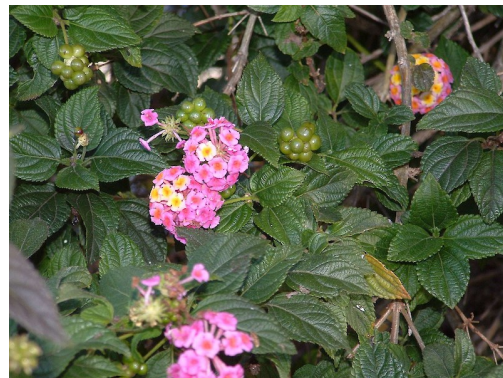


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