PEST PLANTS OF PORT STEPHENS

Chinese Violet

(*Asystasia gangetica subspecies micrantha*)

IDENTIFICATION

Chinese violet grows in sprawling mats.

Key identification features: Leaves and stems have scattered hairs. Leaves are paler beneath and occur in pairs on stems. The leaves are oval shaped, sometimes almost triangular, 2.5 – 16.5 cm long and 0.5 – 5.5 cm wide. White bell-shaped flowers are 2 – 2.5 cm long, with characteristic purple blotches in two parallel lines inside. Fruit capsules are 3 cm long, guitar-shaped (with the neck of guitar attached to stem) and contain four flattened seeds held in place by conspicuous hooks.

Flowers: Appear in late summer.

Problems caused: Invades bushland, smothering vegetation. Competes strongly for water nutrient and light - it can smother Lantana.

Dispersal: Plants spread by seed and plant fragments and can flower and fruit year round. The seeds are dispersed explosively from the drying fruit capsules. Winter frosts kill above-ground plant parts but plants regrow the following spring from their basal shoots.

Trailing stems can take root at each node when they come into contact with moist soil. Most infestations in Australia have occurred as a result of dumping garden waste or uncontrolled garden plantings growing into nearby areas.

Legislation: Chinese violet is a Class 1 State Prohibited Weed across NSW under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993. It must be eradicated and land must be kept free of the plant. As a notifiable weed, all outbreaks must be reported to the local council within 24 hours, and the plant is prohibited from sale in NSW.

CONTROL MEASURES

Your local council weeds officer will assist with identification, control information and removal of this weed. Infestations can be spread by inappropriate control activities. New infestations can develop from any rhizomes that are moved or dropped during control activities. Early detection and eradication will prevent the spread of this weed.

Seedlings can be hand pulled if all the roots can be removed.

For established plants use herbicides containing Dicamba and MCPA eg Yates Bindii spray.

Acknowledgments

References: Chinese violet Weed Management Guide (2003) Weed Management CRC.

DPI Weed Alert, Chinese Violet revised addition (2012)

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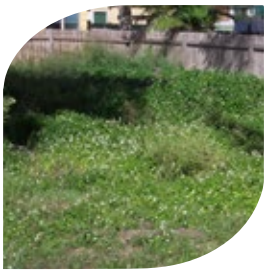
ABOUT THE PLANT



Chinese violet is a rapidly growing perennial creeper that grows to 1 m high, but can grow over vegetation up to 3 m tall. It is a potentially serious environmental and agricultural weed in Australia as it can completely smother other vegetation, removing habitat, and reducing biodiversity and productivity. This weed grows in tropical and subtropical areas, and is on Australia's Alert List for Environmental Weeds (28 non-native plants in the early stages of establishment within Australia, identified as a threat to biodiversity).

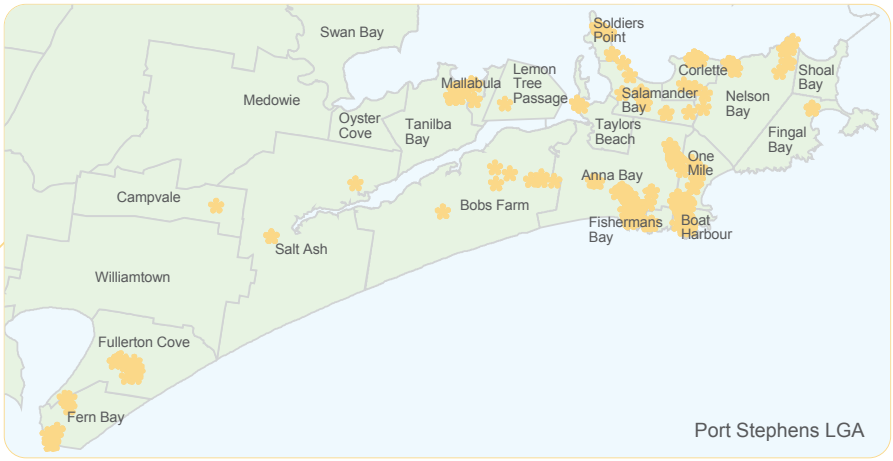
This subspecies of Chinese violet has become invasive in Australia, with its first recording as naturalised made in New South Wales, at Boat Harbour north of Newcastle in 1999. It is now known to occur in a number of nearby locations, and was found at South West Rocks near Kempsey on the NSW Mid North coast in 2009. These infestations are currently subject to an eradication program and there are no other infestations currently known in NSW.

Another commonly cultivated subspecies of Chinese violet (Asystasia gangetica subspecies gangetica), is planted widely in Australia but is less weedy. This subspecies has purple flowers and is naturalised in North Queensland and in the Northern Territory.

WORLD STATUS

Chinese violet is native to India, the Malay Peninsula and Africa. It is a major weed overseas, notably in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Pacific islands, where it infests crops such as rubber and coffee, but particularly oil palm plantations.

In Australia the weed is confined almost exclusively to the Port Stephens Region of NSW, however it has the potential to invade all of tropical and subtropical Australia, posing a serious threat to agricultural productivity and costing a fortune to control.



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