

Mother-in-law's tongue

Dracaena trifasciata



Native to Nigeria, mother-in-law's tongue prefers well-drained soils in shady areas but will tolerate dry periods.

A popular garden plant that when dumped as garden waste, will survive and establish well in bushland, crowding out low growing native plants. Mother-in-law's tongue spreads by rhizomes dumped as garden waste.

Legal requirements

Mother-in-law's tongue is not a prohibited or restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. However, by law, everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants under their control.

Local governments must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants in their area. This plan may include actions to be taken on mother-in-law's tongue. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.



Queensland
Government

Description

Mother-in-law's tongue is a herb or forb that grows upright to 60 cm. Leaves emerge from rhizomes as stiff, lance-shaped leaves, 0.6–1.2 m long, which are dark green with a mottling of grey-green and yellow throughout.

Flowers are small, cream to green in colour, tubular, 25–30 mm long, and carried on a spike. The fruit are small, round, orange berries and 7–9 mm in size. Seeds are pale brown, oblong, and 6–7 mm long and 5 mm wide. Rhizomes are a bright orange colour, thick and fleshy, and succulent in nature.

Control

Manual control

Carefully dig out isolated plants and small infestations, making sure that all fragments of the substantial rhizome system are removed. This requires persistent effort, very regular monitoring of the site, and the removal of any new growth and its rhizome. To prevent reshooting, all plant pieces should be put into strong bags and removed from bushland.

Herbicide control

There are no herbicide products specifically registered for the control of mother-in-law's tongue in Queensland. However, a permit allows people generally to use some herbicide products to control mother-in-law's tongue as an invasive plant in various situations.

See Table 1 for the treatment options in situations allowed by the permit.

Prior to using the herbicides listed under this permit (PER11463) you must read or have read to you and understand the conditions of the permit. To obtain a copy of this permit visit apvma.gov.au.

Follow up

Monitor treated areas regularly for any new seedlings or regrowth.

More information

More information is available from your local government or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

Table 1. Herbicides for the control of mother-in-law's tongue

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Registration details	Comments
Non-agricultural areas, domestic and public service areas, commercial and industrial areas, bushland/native forests, roadsides, rights-of-way, vacant lots, wastelands, wetlands, dunal and coastal areas	Glyphosate 360 g/L (e.g. Weedmaster Duo®) and other formulations	1 L per 100 L water plus a wetting agent For other formulations consult PER11463	APVMA permit PER11463 (expires 30/04/2027)	Spot spray Addition of a wetting agent is essential
	Metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (e.g. Associate, Ken-Met 600 WG)	10 g per 100 L water plus a wetting agent		
	Imazapyr 250 g/L (e.g. Unimaz 250 SL, Warrant 250)	400 mL per 100 L water plus wetting agent		Spot spray Do not use imazapyr near desirable plants or where their roots may extend

Read the label carefully before use. Always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.

