

Senegal tea

Gymnocoronis spilanthoides



Senegal tea is an aggressive, invasive plant. Its stems can grow up to 15 cm per week. It can form floating mats, blocking irrigation ditches, shallow dams and other waterways.

Senegal tea has the potential to become a new water weed throughout tropical and subtropical areas of Queensland, particularly in shallow and slow-moving bodies of water.

Senegal tea is a native of tropical and subtropical South America and was originally introduced into Australia as an aquarium plant.



Queensland
Government

Legal requirements

Senegal tea is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. It must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment. The Act requires everyone to take all reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants under their control. This is called a general biosecurity obligation (GBO).

At a local level, each local government must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants in its area. This plan may include actions to be taken on senegal tea. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

Description

Senegal tea is an aquatic perennial that grows over the water surface or in wet, marshy soils. The plant can grow in various forms, producing runners and floating stems up to 2.5 m in length, or growing as rounded bushes.

Leaves are 5–20 cm in length, shiny dark green with serrated margins, and grow in opposite pairs. Stems are hollow between the nodes, allowing the plant to float. Young stems are light green in colour with dark green blotches. The young round stems become six-sided as the plant matures. Flowers resemble white pompoms and are 15–20 mm in diameter. The seed is yellow-brown and ribbed.

Life cycle

Flowering starts in late spring to early summer and continues until temperatures drop to prevent growth. The majority of seeds germinate in spring, though they can also germinate in summer if conditions are right.

Senegal tea will overwinter and become dormant when temperatures drop. Once conditions improve, seedlings will germinate and existing stems will reshoot.

Methods of spread

The most important method of spread in Australia is through cultivation and sale as an aquarium or ornamental water plant, and through dumping of fish tank contents into waterways.

Senegal tea spreads by broken stem and leaf fragments and seed. Seeds can be spread by water and in soil on vehicle tyres and on animals' feet.

Habitat and distribution

Initial infestations were located in New South Wales and Tasmania. In January 1995, Senegal tea was found along a creek bank in Redland Shire, on the outskirts of Brisbane. This was the first time this plant had been found in Queensland. Subsequently it has been detected in other locations around south east Queensland.

Control

Managing Senegal tea

The GBO requires a person to take reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks posed by Senegal tea.

This fact sheet provides information and some options for controlling Senegal tea.

Mechanical control

All removed plant material should be placed in a sealed plastic bag, left in the sunlight to decompose and then disposed of at a council-approved landfill tip. Alternatively, the material should be removed and left in the sun to dry, and then burnt. Care must be taken not to leave broken plant pieces in the area.

Herbicide control

Senegal tea can be sprayed only between August and April. Repeat treatments may be necessary.

Herbicide options available for the control of Senegal tea in Queensland are shown in Table 1.

Landholders and contractors should check if the property is in a hazardous area as defined in the *Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966* prior to spraying.

More information

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





Table 1. Herbicides for the control of Senegal tea

| Situation | Herbicide | Rate | Comments |
|--|---|--|--|
| Aquatic areas | Glyphosate 360 g/L and other formulations registered for use in aquatic areas | 360 g/L product: 10 mL/L (consult PERMIT 12726 for rates for other formulations) | <p>APVMA PERMIT 12726 (expires 30/06/2026) If a wetter is required use Nufarm Bonus (approved under APVMA PERMIT 81236 (expires 30/06/2025))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spray between August and April. • DO NOT continue spraying if any adverse effects occur on non-target organisms such as fish. • DO NOT spray directly onto the water surface and/or non-target species. • Apply spray directly onto the target weed. • DO NOT broadcast spray over the water. |
| Aquatic and semi aquatic situations (non potable water areas only) | Metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (e.g. Associate, Ken-Met 600) | 5–10 g product/100 L water plus 100–200 mL Bonus surfactant (PERMIT 81236) | <p>APVMA PERMIT 14729 (expires 30/06/2024) (consult label)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spray between August and April. • DO NOT continue spraying if any adverse effects occur on non-target organisms such as fish <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – DO NOT spray directly onto the water surface and/or non-target species. – Apply spray directly onto the target weed • DO NOT broadcast spray over the water. <p><i>Metsulfuron-methyl only:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO NOT apply more than three times per year. Applications should be 30 days apart. • Minimise off target damage and water pollution by spraying towards the bank. • Care must be taken when mixing to avoid soil contamination that may lead to surface or ground water contamination. |
| | Glyphosate 360 g/L registered for use in aquatic areas (numerous products) | 1 L product/100 L water | |

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

