Mistflower

Ageratina riparia

Mistflower, also known as 'creeping crofton weed', is an introduced weed of south-east Queensland. Originally introduced as an ornamental plant, mistflower quickly invades disturbed areas and reduces pasture production.

An aggressive insavive plant in south-eastern Queensland, mistflower spreads into pastures, reducing the carrying capacity significantly. It will also spread into bushland, displacing native vegetation. It will quickly invade disturbed areas on frost-free slopes and dominate riverine groundcover habitats, excluding many native species and the native animals that rely on those plants.

Well-managed pastures combined with timely herbicide use will control mistflower before it becomes thickly established. Early prevention is best to avoid costly problems later.

Legal requirements

Mistflower 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.

Queensland Government

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

Description

Mistflower is a low-growing, sprawling perennial herb growing up to 60 cm high. It has numerous branching stems that produce roots at the joints where they touch the ground. Leaves are opposite, mostly 7.5 cm long and 2.5 cm wide, toothed along the edges and tapered at each end.

White flowers, similar to those of crofton weed, are produced in winter, in small, dense heads at the ends of the branches.

Seeds are slender, angular, 2 mm long, black, and have fine white hairs at the tip.

Life cycle

Seeds germinate in late spring to early summer. Budding occurs around July to August, with full flowering occurring in the period August to October. After flowering, the top of the plant dies off and reshoots from the base. Seeds (achenes) are wind-borne but would normally not travel great distances. They are also carried by running water.

Habitat and distribution

A native of Central and South America, mistflower is restricted to the south-eastern corner of Queensland. It is common on damp hillsides among rocks, along shaded, damp creek banks and in other sheltered, moist places. There is considerable invasion of steep hillsides and roadsides in wetter plateau areas, with the plant favouring south-facing slopes.

Management strategies

Seeds are transported by wind and running water so. Where possible, plants should be treated before flowering, or certainly before hard seed is formed.

Control

Biological control

A stem gall fly was introduced from Hawaii and released in the field in 1987. Unfortunately, the gall fly has had little impact on mistflower plants as a result of attacks by native parasites; it is therefore not a suitable option for controlling mistflower.

Mechanical control

Pull out small plants and ensure proper disposal by burning them or putting them into plastic bags to rot down.

Cultivation, grubbing, hoeing and burning where appropriate, followed by the planting of competitive pastures, or replanting with native vegetation, will control mistflower. However, mechanical methods other than hand pulling may not be feasible on steep, rocky hillsides or over large areas.

Herbicide control

See Table 1. for herbicides for the control of mistflower. Before using any herbicide, always read the label carefully. All herbicides must be applied strictly in accordance with the directions on the label.

Pasture management

To provide competition for mistflower seedlings, ensure you manage stocking rates and fertilise pastures.

Do not overgraze pastures. Aerial application of fertiliser in steep country produces thick pasture, which will provide strong competition for mistflower. Re-establishment of pasture, where necessary, after herbicidal control is recommended to restrict seedling regeneration and prevent erosion. Preferably, newly established pastures should not be grazed until they have seeded.

Any regrowth of mistflower should be spot sprayed with any of the herbicides listed below.

More information

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

Table 1. Herbicides for the control of mistflower

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Comments[1]
Non-crop	Dicamba 500 g/L (e.g. Kamba 500, Dicamba 500)	12 L/ha	Add wetting agent and use 1000–2000 L water/ha
		800 mL/100 L	High volume
		180 mL/15 L/150 m^2	Knapsack
Domestic areas, commercial, industrial and public service areas, agricultural non-crop areas, forests and rights-of-way	Glyphosate 360 g/L (e.g. Roundup, glyphosate 360) And other formulations	500 mL/100 L	Handgun
		75 mL/15 L	Knapsack
		3 mL of 1:9 (10%) solution per m^2	High concentration/low volume application, e.g. gas gun, sprinkler sprayer
Native pastures, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas	Metsulfuron methyl 600 g/kg (e.g. Associate, Ken-Met 600 WG)	5 g/100 L water plus wetting agent	Actively growing plants up to early flowering. Spray to thoroughly wet all foliage, but not to cause run-off
	Aminopyralid 375 g/kg + Metsulfuron-methyl 300 g/kg (e.g. Stinger)	10 g/100L water plus wetting agent	Foliar spray
	Triclopyr 75 g/L + Metsulfuron-methyl 28 g/L (e.g. Zelam Brush Weed)	125 mL/100 L water	Foliar spray Actively growing plants with fully expanded leaves but before flowering Spray to thoroughly wet all foliage and stems – do not over wet
Agricultural non-crop areas, commercial and industrial areas, forests, pastures and rights-of-way	Fluroxypyr 200 g/L[4] (e.g. Fluroxypyr 200)	Consult the label for the rate for the product	Foliar spray Seedlings and young plants up to flowering Pasture legumes may be damaged
	Fluroxypyr 333 g/L[4] (e.g. Starane Advanced®)		
	Fluroxypyr 400 g/L[4] (e.g. Fluroxypyr 400)		
	Fluroxypyr 140 g/L[4] + aminopyralid 10 g/L (e.g. Hotshot)	700 mL/100 L water	Foliar spray Seedlings and young plants up to flowering
	Picloram 75 g/L + 2,4-D 300 g/L[2,4] (e.g. Tordon 75-D®)	650 mL/100 L water	Foliar spray Pasture legumes may be damaged
	Triclopyr 300 g/L + Picloram[2,4] 100 g/L (e.g. Conqueror) or Triclopyr 300 g/L + Picloram[2,4] 100 g/L + aminopyralid 8 g/L (e.g. Grazon Extra®[3])	350 mL/100 L	Foliar spray, spring to autumn Pasture legumes may be damaged
		500 mL/10 L	High concentration/low volume application e.g. gas gun, sprinkler sprayer Plants less than 1.5 m high

Notes:

[1] The optimum time for spraying is at the budding stage of growth.

[2] Products containing picloram should not be used in Hazardous Area No. 1 (Moreton Bay Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Regional Council).

[3] Must not be used in hazardous areas without a Biosecurity Queensland permit.

[4] Products containing fluroxypyr or picloram plus 2,4–D have a 7–day withholding period in agricultural situations before grazing or cutting for stockfeed.

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

05/24