



Mistflower

Ageratina riparia



Mistflower is an introduced weed of south-east Queensland.

Originally introduced as an ornamental plant, mistflower quickly invades disturbed areas and reduces pasture production.

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

Description

Mistflower is a low-growing, sprawling perennial herb 40–60 cm high. It has numerous branching stems which 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, with fine white hairs at the tip.

The problem

Mistflower, also known as "creeping crofton weed", is an aggressive weed in south-eastern Queensland, spreading into pastures, reducing the carrying capacity significantly and spreading into bushland displacing native vegetation. It will quickly invade disturbed areas on frost-free slopes and dominate rivervine groundcover habitats, excluding many native species and the native animals which were reliant upon those plants.

There is no field evidence to support claims that the plant is toxic to stock.

Life cycle

Seeds germinate in late spring-summer. Budding occurs around July–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, the plant favouring south-facing slopes.

Declaration

Mistflower is not a declared plant under Queensland legislation. A Local Government may declare mistflower under its own local law.

Control

The best form of weed control is prevention. Always treat weed infestations when small, do not allow weeds to establish. Weed control is not cheap but it is cheaper now than next year, or the year after. Proper planning ensures you get value for each dollar spent.

Look at your weed problem carefully:

- Can you realistically eradicate it?
- Or should you contain the weed to stop new infestations developing while you reduce existing ones?
- What are you required to do by legislation?
- How does weed control fit into your property management plan?
- What can you do to restore areas and prevent re-establishment?

The best approach is usually to combine different methods. Control may include chemical, mechanical, fire and biological methods combined with land management changes. The control methods you choose should suit the specific weed and your particular situation.

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.

Pasture management

Well-managed stocking rates and fertilised pasture should be employed to provide competition for mistflower seedlings, as well as the re-establishment of pasture and establishment of sown pasture grasses following herbicide control treatments.

Do not overgraze pasture. Aerial application of fertiliser in steep country produces thick pasture with which mistflower does not readily compete. Re-establishment of pasture, where necessary, after herbicidal control is recommended to restrict seedling regeneration and prevent erosion. Newly established pastures preferably should not be grazed until they have seeded.

Any regrowth of mistflower should be spot sprayed with any of the herbicides listed in Table 1.

Mechanical control

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

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

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 attack by native parasites and is not a suitable option for controlling Mistflower.

Herbicide control

Table 1 details the herbicides registered 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.

Further information

Further information is available from the vegetation management/weed control/environmental staff at your local government.

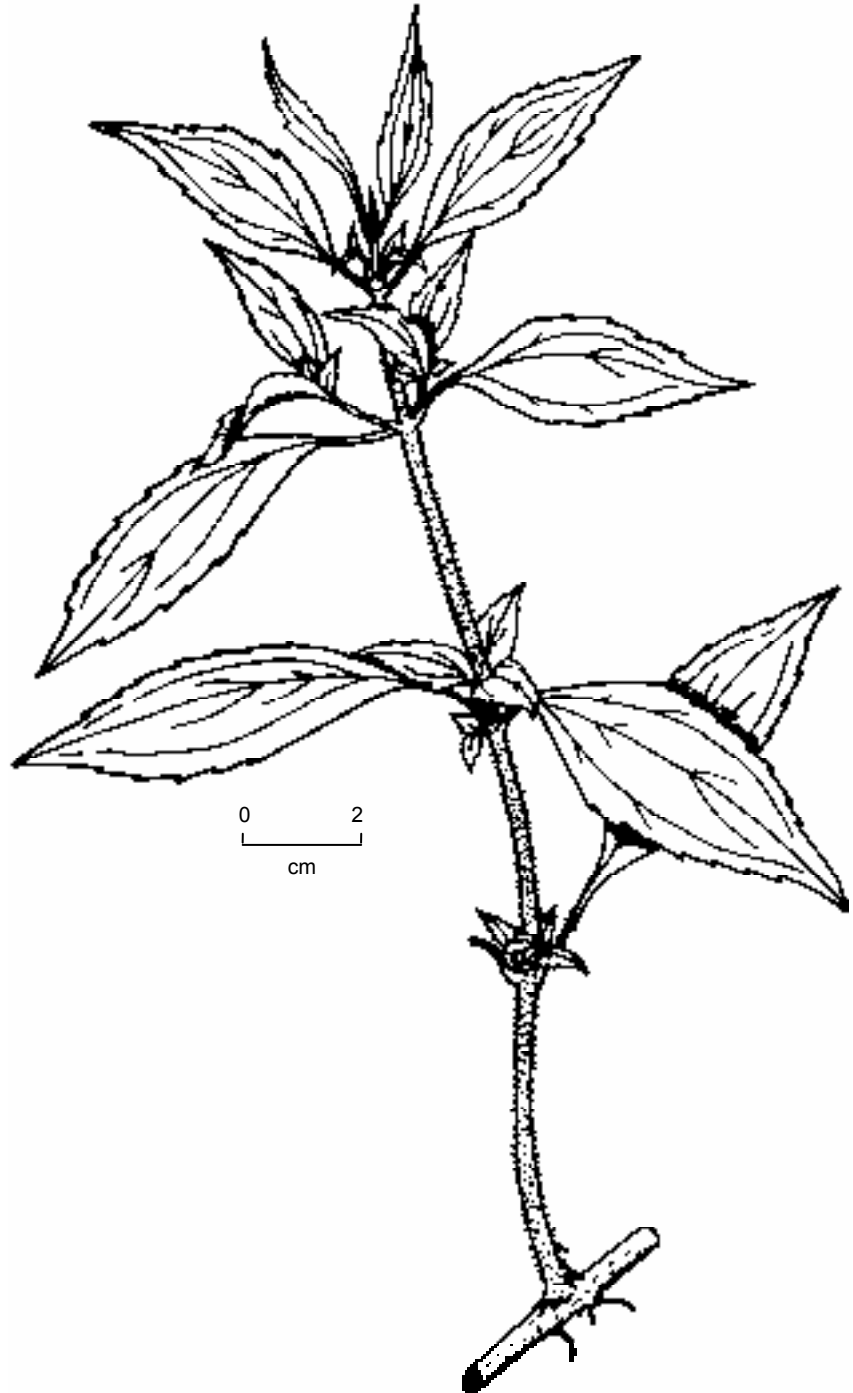
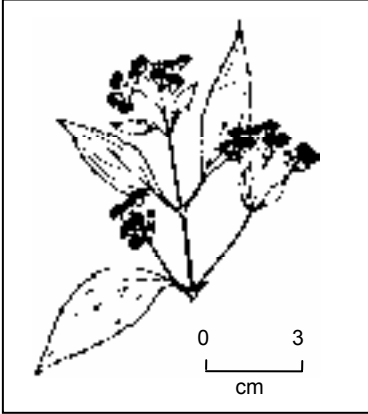


TABLE 1 – HERBICIDES REGISTERED FOR THE CONTROL OF MISTFLOWER

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Comments ¹
non-agricultural, commercial and industrial land; rights-of-way	Dicamba e.g. Banvel 200 ^R	30 L/ha 2 L/100 L 450 mL/15 L/150 m ²	Add wetting agent and use 1000–2000 L water/ha High volume Knapsack
pastures; non agricultural, commercial and industrial land; rights-of-way	glyphosate 360	0.5 L/100 L 75 mL/15 L 3 mL of 1:9 (10%) solution per m ²	Handgun Knapsack Sprinkler sprayer
pastures; commercial and industrial land; rights-of-way	metsulfuron methyl e.g. Brush Off ^R	5 g/100 L	Apply at any time of the year but preferably when plants are actively growing. Avoid the post flowering senescent period
pastures; commercial and industrial land; rights-of-way	fluroxypyr 200 g/L e.g. Starane ^R	0.5 L/100 L 75 mL/15 L	Pasture legumes may be damaged Knapsack pasture legumes may be damaged
pastures; commercial and industrial land; rights-of-way	picloram ² + 2,4-D 75 g + 300 g e.g. Tordon 75-D ^R	1 L/100 L 0.65 L/ 100 L	2500–3500 L water per hectare Pasture legumes may be damaged Spot spray
pastures; commercial and industrial land; rights-of-way	picloram ² + trichlopyr e.g. Grazon DS ^{R*} *Cannot be used in hazardous areas without a Department of Primary Industries Permit	0.35 L/ 100 L 2.5 L/100 L	Pasture legumes may be damaged Misting

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 (Caboolture, Caloundra City, Maroochy, Noosa, Pine Rivers and Redcliffe Shires).



Fact sheets are available from NRW service centres and the NRW Information Centre phone (07 3237 1435). Check our web site <www.nrw.qld.gov.au> to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this Pest Fact should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the utilisation of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, the Department of Natural Resources and Water does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.