African Tulip

What is it?

The African Tulip Tree *(Spathodea campanulata)* is a fast-growing ornamental tree native to tropical Africa. Easily recognised for its striking orange-red flowers, it was introduced to Australia as a garden plant but has become invasive in the Wet Tropics.

Why is it a problem?

African tulip tree poses a significant threat to native ecosystems. It invades riparian zones, farmland, urban gardens and disturbed areas, outcompeting other vegetation and forming dense thickets. Its dense canopy blocks sunlight, preventing the growth of understory plants and its flowers are toxic to native bees. The tree produces large quantities of wind dispersed seeds, enabling rapid and long range spread. The tree suckers readily when disturbed or stressed, making it challenging to control.

Characteristics

African tulip is an evergreen tree, growing to over 20 metres. It has broad oval-shaped leaves with distinctive veins. The leaves are bronze-coloured when young, turning glossy green as they mature. Flowers are a large orange to red with frilled yellow margins on the petals. The papery seeds are wind dispersed and form in elongated pods, up to 20cm long, which split lengthwise as they dry.

BIOSECURITY **RISKS**

How to spot it on your property

Look for a tall tree with a wide canopy, glossy green leaves, and clusters of vibrant orange-red flowers. The presence of seedlings in nearby areas may indicate an infestation or mature tree nearby.

What to do about it

- **PREVENTION:** Avoid planting African tulip and control/replace garden specimens with suitable non-invasive alternatives.
- **PHYSICAL REMOVAL:** Hand-pull freshly germinated seedlings.
- **CHEMICAL CONTROL:** For established seedlings, saplings and mature trees, cut down and treat stumps with herbicide to prevent regrowth. Treat upper cut sections as well to prevent roots forming where it contacts the ground. No herbicide is currently registered for control of African tulip in Queensland. However, an off-label use permit (Permit No. PER11463 *https://permits.apvma.gov.au/per11463.pdf*) allows use of various herbicides for control of environmental weeds in non-agricultural areas, bushland, forests, wetlands, and coastal and adjacent areas. Follow up control may be required.

Where to find out more

RESOURCES: Check out your Local Government's Biosecurity Plan available through your Council's website.

Refer to the Queensland Government Pest Fact for African tulip for detailed control information and herbicide rates.

BIOSECURITY OBLIGATIONS AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:
Under the Biosecurity Act 2014, African tulip must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment. Penalties apply.

GENERAL BIOSECURITY OBLIGATION:
The Biosecurity Act 2014 requires everyone to take all reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with African tulip under their control.

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