



Woody Weeds in the Wet Tropics



What are they?

Woody weeds are invasive trees and shrubs that spread aggressively, outcompeting native vegetation. **Key species include:**



KOSTER'S CURSE (*Miconia crenata* syn *Clidemia hirta*)

A dense shrub spread by birds that smothers native understorey vegetation.



GIANT BRAMBLE (*Rubus alceifolius*) A fast-growing vine with thorny stems that forms dense thickets.



WILD TOBACCO (*Solanum mauritianum*) A fast-growing shrub with large, velvety leaves and purple flowers which is spread by birds.



SIAM WEED (*Chromolaena odorata*) A fast-growing, wind-dispersed shrub or scrambling vine with distinctive forked leaf venation.



What are they?



GUAVA & CHERRY GUAVA

(Psidium guajava and Psidium cattleianum) Dense woody shrubs or small trees spread by birds and animals, often forming dense thickets inside forests and farmland.

LEUCAENA (*Leucaena leucocephala* and hybrids)

A weedy tree that spreads rapidly with hard seeds in open areas, along roadsides and waterways.



LANTANA (*Lantana camara*)

A sprawling, thorny shrub spread by birds that invades disturbed areas, forest edges and clearings.



BROAD-LEAVED AND SMALL-LEAVED PRIVET

(Ligustrum lucidum and Ligustrum sinense) Privets form large shrubs or small trees, producing thousands of small bird-dispersed berries.

Image: "*Ligustrum lucidum* - 'Chinese privet'" by Tatters is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



Why are they a problem?

Woody weeds:

- Smother and outcompete native plants, reducing biodiversity.
- Alter fire regimes by restricting native grass growth and cover.
- Invade riparian zones, affecting water flow and quality.
- Provide habitat for invasive animals, worsening ecological impacts.
- Crowd out crops, pastures and infrastructure on farms.

Characteristics

Woody weeds thrive in disturbed areas, roadsides, and riparian zones. They can spread through seeds, root suckers, or stem fragments, making control difficult. They will usually appear when the management of an area changes particularly after landslips, wildfires, de-stocking or spelling crops. They can also actively invade intact forests. Woody weeds will often form monocultures in disturbed areas or areas which can't be slashed or grazed, and can quickly spread into neighbouring native vegetation and farmland.

How to spot them on your property

Look for dense, fast-growing shrubs or trees and identify from flowers, fruit, leaves or growth forms. Woody weeds will often grow together and may also occur alongside invasive grasses like guinea grass in disturbed or fallow areas.

BIOSECURITY RISKS



What to do about it

- **Prevention through maintenance:** Regular mowing or slashing can limit the establish of many woody weeds. Replanting native vegetation in rough or steep areas can help shade out woody weeds and reduce management costs.
- **Physical removal and mechanical control:** Hand-pulling seedlings and cutting back mature plants can reduce the vigour of woody weeds. For dense infestations, mechanical slashers, mulchers and brush cutters can be used to reduce vigour and make follow-up herbicide control easier.
- **Cultural control:** In open forests and grasslands appropriate fire regimes can help to limit the abundance of woody weeds by maintaining healthy native grass cover.
- **Chemical control:** There are some on-label herbicides available for woody weed species. 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 for the woody weeds which are a priority in your area.

Refer to the Queensland Government Pest Fact for woody weeds for detailed control information and herbicide rates.

BIOSECURITY OBLIGATIONS AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:

Under the Biosecurity Act many woody weeds must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment. Penalties apply. They may also be declared under Local Laws restricting their sale and distribution.

GENERAL BIOSECURITY OBLIGATION:

The Biosecurity Act requires everyone to take all reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with woody weeds under their control.