Candyleaf

Stevia ovata

Candyleaf is native to tropical America, from Texas south to Mexico, Ecuador and Peru. It can form dense stands replacing native vegetation, pastures and also invades disturbed and undisturbed land.

Legal requirements

Candyleaf 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). This fact sheet gives examples of how you can meet your 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 candyleaf. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

Queensland Government

Description

Candyleaf is a perennial plant that is usually 50–100 cm high but can grow up to 3 m high with some plants having over 30 stems, with a large, strong rootball. Its leaves are arranged in mostly opposite pairs along the stem, but sometimes alternately. Petioles are 2–10 mm long. Leaf blades have raised venation (generally limited to mid-vein and primary laterals). Leaves are variable in shape but generally ovate to trullate and mostly 3–6 cm long with serrate margins.

The flower heads are arranged in more or less congested, compact clusters. Peduncles are 1–2 mm, sessile-glandular and finely villous. Involucres are 4–6 mm. Flowers are white or light pink; lobes are sessile-glandular. The pappi are shorter than the corollas.

Life cycle

Candyleaf flowers around May and produces seed around June. It dies back around September with seedlings emerging after first wet-season rain. Fresh seed is highly viable – about 75%. Seedlings can flower as young as three months and as small as 8 cm. The stem sections on soil can also reshoot.

Methods of spread

The seeds are dispersed by wind, water, machinery and animals. The longevity of seeds is unknown.

Habitat and distribution

Candyleaf prefers open, disturbed, rocky sites, generally on mountains at high altitudes. It can be found along roadsides, woodlands and native pastures. Infestations have been detected in North Queensland.

Control

Managing candyleaf

The GBO requires a person to take reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks posed by candyleaf. This fact sheet provides information and some options for controlling candyleaf.

Herbicide control

There are no herbicide products specifically registered for the control of candyleaf in Queensland. However, a permit allows people to generally use some herbicide products to control candyleaf as an invasive plant in various situations.

See Table 1 for the treatment options in situations allowed by the permit.

Prior to using the herbicides listed under this permit (PER11463) you must read or have read to you and understand the conditions of the permit. To obtain a copy of this permit visit apvma.gov.au.

More information

For more information contact your local government or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

Table 1. Herbicides for the control of candyleaf

Non-agricultural areas, domestic and public service areas, commercial and industrial areas, bushland/native forests, roadsides, rights-of- way, vacant lots, wastelands, wetlands, dunal and coastal areas	Fluroxypyr 333 g/L (e.g. Starane Advanced)	600 mL per 100 L water Plus 200 mL per 100L of Pulse Penetrant or equivalent	APVMA permit PER11463 (permit expires 30/04/2027)	Spot spray Consult label for critical use comments Do not spray if rain is likely within one hour
	Triclopyr 300 g/L + Picloram 100 g/L + Aminopyralid 8 g/L (e.g. Grazon Extra Herbicide)	500 mL per 100L water Plus 200 mL per 100L of Pulse Penetrant or equivalent		
	Fluroxypyr 140 g/L Aminopyralid 10 g/L Liquid hydrocarbon 418 g/L (e.g. Hotshot Herbicide)	1.4 L per 100L of water Plus 200 mL per 100L of Pulse Penetrant or equivalent		High volume treatment Spot spray As per label instructions

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

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