

Yellow oleander

Cascabela thevetia



Yellow oleander (also known as Captain Cook tree) is native to tropical South America and the West Indies, and has often been planted as an ornamental tree in domestic gardens and amenity situations. When older, the trees are capable of producing large amounts of seed. All parts of the plant are poisonous, especially the seeds that can be fatal if ingested.

Yellow oleander has become a highly invasive plant in parts of Queensland, especially along creek systems. If left uncontrolled, yellow oleander can threaten sustainable pasture production and the environment. This has been evident in established infestations near Mingela and Ingham. Eradication of isolated trees can prevent this situation occurring elsewhere.

Legal requirements

Yellow oleander 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.



Queensland
Government

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 yellow oleander. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

Description

Yellow oleander is a large, attractive tree that can grow up to 10 m high. It has a milky sap and is easily recognised by its narrow, pointed leaves and bell-shaped, waxy flowers. Flowers are up to 5 cm in diameter, slightly fragrant, short lived and may be yellow or peach coloured. Fruit are green (turning black when ripe), lantern shaped, 2.5–4 cm in diameter and contain 1–2 seeds. All parts of this plant are very poisonous, especially the oily seeds to most birds, mammals and amphibians.

Life cycle

It flowers throughout most of the year and it only reproduces through seed. Young plants have the potential to flower and produce seeds within the year.

Method of spread

Yellow oleander can spread in dumped garden waste.

Habitat and distribution

Naturalised populations are distributed mainly in the coastal areas of eastern Australia. It is most common in coastal southern and central Queensland. Scattered populations are also present in the coastal parts of northern Queensland.

It prefers waterways, roadsides, waste areas, disturbed sites, old gardens, open woodlands, pastures, coastal environments and occasionally plantation crops in tropical and sub-tropical regions.

Control

Managing yellow oleander

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

Effective control of yellow oleander can be achieved through a combination of mechanical and herbicide treatments or by herbicide treatment alone. Choose control methods to suit your particular situation.

All treated areas must be periodically checked and any regrowth treated, or the initial treatment efforts will be wasted. Follow-up must be undertaken to ensure a successful control program.

Prevention and early detection

The best form of control is prevention. Always treat infestations when small—do not allow to establish. Control is not cheap, but the cost will escalate if

management is delayed. Proper planning ensures greater value for each dollar spent.

Small individual plants may be manually removed, taking care to remove the roots. This option is not feasible for larger specimens.

Mechanical control

Isolated individuals can be grubbed out with a blade, either front or rear-mounted to a dozer or tractor.

Dense infestations can initially be cleared with a cutterbar (if the terrain and soil type permit). Remaining broken and exposed stems should be treated with basal bark spray as soon as possible following clearing. In order to ensure a successful control program, regrowth must be sprayed.

Herbicide control

Selection of a suitable method depends on the size of the target tree and the situation. Use of a wetting agent may increase the efficacy of herbicides. Herbicides work best when plants are actively growing. Some herbicide treatments may take more than a year to kill yellow oleander.

Herbicides approved for the control of yellow oleander are listed in Table 1. Always read the label carefully before using any herbicide. All herbicides must be applied strictly in accordance with the directions on the label.

Spot spray

For effective foliar control, spray the whole plant thoroughly to the point of run-off, wetting every leaf during a time when the plant is actively growing. This will vary depending on the location but is generally during spring or summer after rain. Foliar spraying is most effective on plants less than 2 m high. Treating larger plants is very costly and it is difficult to obtain good coverage with the herbicide. For effective results, do not treat infestations during hot, dry, summer periods; when windy; or when the plant is stressed from drought or waterlogging. A surfactant should be added to the herbicide mixture at rates specified on the herbicide label.

Basal bark spray

For stems up to 5 cm in diameter, carefully spray completely around the base of the plant to a height of 40 cm above ground level. For effective control of multi-stemmed plants, each stem must be thoroughly sprayed. Larger trees may be controlled by spraying to a greater height—up to 100 cm above ground level.

Cut stump

At any time of year, cut the stems off horizontally as close to the ground as possible and immediately (within 15 seconds) swab or spray the cut surfaces and associated stem with the herbicide mixture.

Stem injection

Axe cuts should be made at 5–7 cm intervals all around the stem (or stems), allowing undamaged bark between cuts. Cuts should be made below the first branch and at an angle of approximately 30° to the stem.

Immediately inject up to 1 mL of herbicide solution per cut, allowing the solution to cover cut surfaces on both the bark and tree.

More information

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



Table 1. Herbicides for the control of yellow oleander

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Comments
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 200 g/L (e.g. Wynca Fluroxypyr 200 Herbicide)	35 mL per 1 L diesel	Basal bark spray
	Fluroxypyr 333 g/L (e.g. Starane Advanced)	21 mL per 1 L diesel	Basal bark. Spray entire circumference of all stems to 40 cm above ground for plants with <5 cm basal diameter—spray to 100 cm for larger plants (PER11463)
	Glyphosate 360 g/L (e.g. Roundup Herbicide)	Undiluted to 1 L per 2 L water	Drill, frill, axe or stem injection Up to 1 mL herbicide solution per 2 cm of hole or cut (PER11463)
	Triclopyr 200 g/L + Picloram 100 g/L (e.g. Apparent Slogger Herbicide)	1 L per 4 L water	
	Triclopyr 200 g/L + Picloram 100 g/L (e.g. Apparent Slogger Herbicide)	1 L per 20 L water	Cut stump Cut stumps to less than 10 cm above ground and immediately paint stump after cutting (PER11463)
	Fluroxypyr 333 g/L (e.g. Starane Advanced)	1 L per 55 L diesel	
	Triclopyr 200 g/L + Picloram 100 g/L (e.g. Apparent Slogger Herbicide)	75 mL per 15 L water	
			Spray where residual control is required away from waterways

There are many available formulations of glyphosate. Consult the table and formulae at the end of PER11463 to determine the correct rates to use with other formulations. Only use herbicides approved for aquatic and riparian situations in those situations.

Persons who wish to prepare for use and/or use products for the purposes specified in APVMA permit PER11463 must read, or have read to them, the details and conditions of the permit. APVMA permit PER11463 expires on 30 September 2027 which is available from the APVMA website at apvma.gov.au.

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

