

# Weeds



A weed is a plant in the wrong place.

In Kuranda, a variety of weeds introduced since white settlement have already caused great damage to the natural environment. Some, such as lantana, have been here a long time. Others have only been discovered recently. A big problem with weeds is that plants with the potential to become weeds can live for many generations in an environment, slowly adapting until a critical point is reached when the plant begins to spread and become a menace to other vegetation or wildlife. For this reason many plants that are not yet a real problem in the area have been included in many published lists of weeds, because they have the potential to become weeds in the future. Any introduced plant that has the ability to survive in rainforest, for example, should be considered a potential weed.

Members of KURANDA **EnviroCare** have compiled a list of 16 of the most significant weeds in the Kuranda area. Descriptions and photographs of these weeds follow.

An excellent illustrated spiral bound book of weeds in the Wet Tropics is available, from KURANDA **EnviroCare**, for sale at around \$5 per copy. The book is titled "Weed Pocket Guide, Agricultural and Environmental Weeds, Far North Queensland", and was compiled by the Wet Tropics Management Authority, in conjunction with the FNQLG Pest Plan Advisory Committee and the DNRM. Weed control sheets giving advice on how to get rid of these weeds are also available from KURANDA **EnviroCare**.

It can be difficult to positively identify weeds, even with the help of photographs. If in doubt, it is likely that someone from KURANDA **EnviroCare** can assist you in your identification, and with control and eradication advice.

## Weed Control Methods

Weed control sheets generally offer advice on chemical control of weeds. Herbicides allow quick and often efficient treatment of large areas of weeds, but they have a number of disadvantages. Some kill plants other than the weeds they are targeting, leaving bare areas that may well grow another crop of weeds. Some have serious impacts on animal life, such as frogs or fish. Many are poisonous to people, and should only be applied with caution, after reading the information that comes with them. Always wear protective clothing and avoid spilling chemicals on exposed skin. Some are also expensive or only obtainable in large quantities.

For these reasons many people prefer to avoid chemical treatments if possible. There are a number of alternative ways of removing weeds listed below.

**Physical Removal.** Weeds may be pulled by hand or dug out with a variety of tools or machinery. Some weeds, such as Singapore Daisy, may be spread by such methods, so precautions must be taken.

If the plants are placed in black plastic bags and left in the sun for several days, the weeds inside will no longer grow. It is best to remove weeds before seed has set.

**Cutting off light.** Black plastic can be spread on weeds and held down with weights. This will eventually kill the weeds, along with all other plants underneath. Some people mulch with cardboard or newspaper, which eventually decomposes, or use thick plant mulch.

**Competition.** While most weeds are very competitive, it may be possible to grow plants that will eventually outcompete them. If trees are planted over Singapore Daisy, for example, and maintained for several years, they will eventually take over from this invasive weed. This is the best long term solution to weed control.