Handy pullout reference

Identify and eradicate these top 6

Alien Plants

CARA CATEGORY 2

BLACK WATTLE

Acacia mearnsii
Pea family (Fabaceae)
Afrikaans: Swartwattel
isiZulu: uwatela

DESCRIPTION
Evergreen tree, up to 15 m high, with slightly hairy young branches displaying golden growth tips. Dark olive-green compound feather-like leaves with raised glands along the entire length of the midrib. Dark brown seed pods, jointed or slightly constricted between the seeds. Pale yellow or cream globular flower heads in large fragrant sprays. Flowers: August to October.

ORIGIN – Australia.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
For shelter, firewood and tanning.

WHERE FOUND/PROBLEMS CAUSED
Ubiquitous throughout KwaZulu-Natal, but typically only forms dense stands where water is plentiful. Black wattle invades grassland, forest gaps, roadsides and watercourses, successfully competing with and replacing indigenous vegetation. The species encroaches into grassland rapidly reducing the carrying capacity of agricultural land.

DID YOU KNOW
Seeds of Black wattle remain viable

for over 50 years! Mature Black wattle does not coppice if cut close to the ground. Saplings may coppice, but do not sucker from the roots like Silver wattle.

CONTROL
Seedlings/saplings: these can be hand-pulled if practical or foliar spray. Biocontrol is available.

CARA CATEGORY 1

BUGWEED

Solanum mauritianum
Potato family (Solanaceae)
Afrikaans: Luisboom, Groot bitterappel
isiZulu: umbangabanga, isigwayana, igayintombi

DESCRIPTION
Tree up to 8 m high, covered in fine hairs. Leaves are large, tobacco-like with 1-2 small leaflets located at the base of each leaf. Fruits are in clusters of 20-80 and are yellow and soft when ripe. Flowers are purple, located in clusters at the end of branches. Flowers: all year.

ORIGIN – South America

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Ornamental.

WHERE FOUND/PROBLEMS CAUSED
Occurs throughout KwaZulu-Natal, favouring the moist conditions associated with inland areas but readily adapts to most environmental conditions. Readily invades forest margins, plantations, wooded kloofs, roadsides, wasteland, water courses and urban open spaces rapidly replacing indigenous species. The fine hairs on the plant may cause respiratory/bronchial problems and/or skin irritations in contact conditions.

DID YOU KNOW
Many birds, e.g. Rameron Pigeon,

prefer bugweed fruit to fruit of indigenous tree species and so accelerate the invasion process.

CONTROL
Hand-pull young plants. Effectively controlled with herbicides although becoming resistant, so take great care. Cut Stump/frill: some workers react to the fine hairs – cover arms and mouth. Foliar Application: usually applied to saplings up to 1 m high. Slash tall plants and treat re-growth. Bio-control is available.

CARA CATEGORY 1

CHROMOLAENA

Chromolaena odorata
Daisy family (Asteraceae)
Triffid weed, Armstrong's weed, Paraffin bush
Afrikaans: Paraffienbos
isiZulu: uhalahala, uboyana, usandanezwe

DESCRIPTION
Perennial evergreen shrub, which may take the form of a scrambler when it grows amongst trees. Often forms dense thickets. Leaves are triangular and pointed with three conspicuous veins from the base. Leaves smell strongly of turpentine or paraffin when crushed. Flowers white in terminal clusters. Flowers: May to September.

ORIGIN – America.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Accidental.

WHERE FOUND/PROBLEMS CAUSED
Throughout coastal KwaZulu-Natal and ubiquitous in Zululand. Competes with and replaces indigenous vegetation, hinders operations in plantations causing increased production costs of timber; increases management costs in nature reserves. Land that is particularly susceptible to infestation by Chromolaena is land that has been neglected or disturbed, however Chromolaena may invade undisturbed areas and once established spreads virulently.

DID YOU KNOW
As many as 1,3 million wind-dispersed seeds are produced per plant. It is highly flammable, even when green and so Chromolaena allows grass fires to penetrate deep into forests and plantations.

CONTROL
Time-consuming and laborious. Continuous follow-up is needed. Uprooting causes soil disturbance which stimulates seed germination. If seedlings are removed manually, press down soil and cover exposed site with leaves. Numerous herbicides are registered. Bio-control agents are available.

CARA CATEGORY 1

LANTANA

Lantana camara
Verbena family (Verbenaceae)
Cherry pie, Tickberry
Afrikaans: Lantana
isiZulu: ubukhwebezana, ubhici

DESCRIPTION
Compact, flowering shrub or untidy scrambler up to 2 m or higher. Stems are square in cross section and are typically covered in rows of small thorns. Dark green, hairy leaves that smell strongly when crushed. Flowers range from pink, red, crimson, yellow, orange or white in compact flat-topped heads, often with several colours in one head. Fruits are one seeded, turning from green to black as they ripen. Flowers: all year round in moist areas but not in winter in dry or frost-prone areas.

ORIGIN – Central/South America.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
For ornamental use and hedging.

WHERE FOUND/PROBLEMS CAUSED
Ubiquitous throughout KwaZulu-Natal. It forms dense, impenetrable thickets, competing and replacing indigenous plants, increasing erosion and seriously interfering with farming and forestry activities. Poisonous and can be toxic to cattle.

DID YOU KNOW
There are over 50 variants of this species, differing in physical features and susceptibility to herbicides. The indigenous Lantana has purple flowers, no thorns on the stems and the leaves do not smell when crushed. It is the most researched weed in the world.

CONTROL
Eradication is laborious and expensive. Small plants may be pulled out by hand when the soil is moist. A large number of registered herbicides. Triclopyrs are not effective. Bio-control agents are available.

Text and photographs in this article are courtesy of WESSA. The text is adapted from WESSA's fieldguide "Invasive Alien Plants in KwaZulu-Natal Management and Control" covering 40 of the most invasive species found in KZN. To get your copy at R35 phone 013 2013126 or email jenny@wessakzn.org.za. To support "Stop the Spread" Campaign contact Lynne Thompson (Project Co-ordinator) on 031 2662603 / cell 072 183 7530 or email: lynne@stopthespread.co.za.

CARA CATEGORY 1

PERESKIA

Pereskia aculeata
Cactus family (Cactaceae)
Barbados gooseberry
Afrikaans: Barbadosstekelbessie
isiZulu: uqwaningi

DESCRIPTION
Spiny, shrubby to clambering vine with long, whip-like branches. Young stems and leaves possess a pair of short, hooked spines in the leaf axils. Mature stems have clusters of hard straight spines. Bright green, glossy leaves with lemon-scented white, cream, or yellow flowers. Flowers: March to July. Fruit is green turning yellow.

ORIGIN – Tropical and South America.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
For ornamental purposes and security hedging.

WHERE FOUND/PROBLEMS CAUSED
A problem plant throughout coastal KwaZulu-Natal and Zululand. Seeds are spread by birds and animals and the species has established itself in the wild. It can form an impenetrable hedge and readily invades plantations, forest margins and gaps.

DID YOU KNOW
The Zulu people plant Pereskia over graves as protection against vandalism. There is a varigated variety that is also invasive. Bougainvillea is often mistaken for Pereskia, but the leaves of Pereskia are fleshier and the thorns have a buffalo horn protruberance at the base.

CONTROL
Extremely difficult. Continuous follow-up is essential. Wearing strong protective gloves cut into the foliage at head and ankle height allowing access to the stems. Remove all cut material. Some think that the aerial parts will die, but others refute this. Dig out stems and roots and burn all cut material on site. Single stems and roots can regrow. Monitor regularly. The destroyed habitat will need rehabilitation. Bio-control available.

CARA CATEGORY 3

SYRINGA

Melia azedarach
Mahogany family (Meliaceae)
Persian lilac
Afrikaans: Seringboom, Maksering
isiZulu: umsilinga

DESCRIPTION
Deciduous spreading tree up to 23 m high. Flowers are blue to mauve, with a pleasant smelling scent. Flowers are borne in clusters at the ends of branches. Fruit consists of oval-shaped, three-seeded berries, that are yellow and wrinkled when ripe. Compound leaves are glossy, deep green and feather-like, with toothed margins. Flowers: October to November.

ORIGIN – Asia

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
For ornamental use.

WHERE FOUND/PROBLEMS CAUSED
One of the most widespread of all the problem plants in KwaZulu-Natal. It is commonly found along streams, roadsides and railway embankments, savannah, urban open spaces and derelict, unmanaged land. Establishes itself easily in such areas, where it replaces indigenous vegetation, blocks waterways and is generally unsightly. It produces an abundance of berries that often remain on the tree for over a year. Seeds germinate easily. Although considered poisonous they are spread by birds, animals, water and human activity.

DID YOU KNOW
It can withstand considerable extremes in climate and altitude. In areas it is the biggest invader within KwaZulu-Natal and is increasing in abundance, especially along rivers. Parts of the plant are used for making herbicides. The wood is used for cabinet making and wood carving. The coppice shoots are used for broom handles.

CONTROL
Reportedly very sensitive to ring-barking, but care must be taken as Syringa coppices strongly. Follow-up is essential.

These are some of/only a percentage of these alien plants affect the sugar industry. For more information on these and other alien invader plants, please consult SASRI Information Sheet 10.3 (Alien plant control – legislation and guidelines for control) which is available from the SASRI Librarian.