Paper mulberry

(Broussonetia papyrifer)

Regional priority weed objective: Eradicate

Paper mulberry is a significant invasive weed in several countries where it poses a threat to local native vegetation.

In addition to its environmental impacts, its pollen is thought to cause inhalant allergies in Islamabad (Pakistan), where it is listed among six of the country's worst plant invaders.

Paper mulberry has been detected in Northern NSW and appears to be in a very early stage of invasion.

The plant's fruit is readily dispersed by bats and birds, allowing this plant to readily escape cultivation in gardens.

Paper mulberry can be confused with Young native Flame tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*), edible Fig fruit tree (*Ficus carisa*) and White mulberry (*Morus alba*).

Description: A fast-growing, deciduous tree with milky sap. It grows up to 15m tall. The twigs are hairy and reddish-brown. The bark is tan and smooth to moderately furrowed. Native to parts of Asia, including Taiwan and Japan. Belongs to the Moraceae family of plants.

Leaves: Simple, alternate, opposite or whorled along the stem, 8–20cm long and variable in shape (unlobed, ovate cordate to deeply-lobed, with lobed leaves more frequent on fast-growing young plants). The upper surface of the leaf is rough to touch (like sandpaper), whereas the underside is covered with soft hairs.

Flowers: The species is dioecious (separate male and female plants). Male flowers are yellowish-white and arranged in an elongate inflorescence (up to 8cm long), whereas female flowers take the form of a round inflorescence.

Fruit: Fruits are red to orange/yellow (green when immature) and 1–4cm in diameter.

Dispersal: Seeds spread via birds, mammals and bats (assuming male and female plants are present). Can produce suckers from its roots, forming dense thickets.

Habitat: Prefers disturbed habitats within tropical, subtropical and warm temperate forests, often in riparian areas, gullies, neglected farmland and gaps in the forest canopy. Grows best on well-drained soils where rainfall exceeds 1000mm per annum.

Impacts: A serious long-term threat to native vegetation and farmland due to its rapid growth and ability to form dense thickets. Under favourable conditions it can displace local native plant species.

ROUS COUNTY COUNCIL

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Declaration and control

Regional priority weed objective: Eradicate

These weeds are present in limited distribution and abundance in some parts of the State. Elimination of the biosecurity risk posed by these weeds is a reasonably practicable objective.

Control methods

If you have seen, or think you have seen, Paper mulberry, please contact Rous County Council on (02) 6623 3800 for positive identification.

Manual and mechanical control: Small seedlings can be manually removed, ideally when the ground is moist as roots need to be removed to prevent regrowth.

Chemical control: Cut-stem, cut-and-swab, or injection methods of herbicide application are recommended because these methods, if used properly, focus applications to target species, minimise the overall amount of herbicide applied, and reduce environmental impacts.

Under Permit 9907 Glyphosate can be used in areas of native vegetation and non-crop areas for a range of weeds, including Paper mulberry. A copy of the permit can be obtained from the APVMA website:
http://www.apvma.gov.au/permits/search.php