

Tropical soda apple

Solanum viarum

Declaration

Regional priority weed objective: Eradication

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 practical objective.



Stages of growth: L-R: Immature fruit; Mature fruit; Ripening fruit.



Description

Tropical soda apple (TSA) is a native of South America. First observed on the NSW North Coast in 2010, TSA has the potential to be aggressively invasive in our region.

An erect shrub to 2m covered in cream coloured prickles to 12mm long on stem and leaves. Densely hairy-lobed ovate leaves, 10-20cm long and 6-15cm wide. White flowers. Immature fruit is pale green with dark-green stripes. Mature fruit is yellow and approximately 20-25mm in diameter. Plants can produce an average of 45,000 seeds.

Reproduction and dispersal

TSA reproduces via seed and can regenerate from root and stem material. The fruit is sweet and cattle will smell and seek them out, spreading viable seed in their manure for up to 6 days after consuming the fruit. After 6 days, any consumed seeds that are passed are no longer viable. In NSW, cattle movements are the major vector of spread, and infestations have been found by tracing cattle movements from infested properties using the National Livestock Identification Scheme database. Horses have also been observed to eat the fruit and seedlings have germinated in horse manure.

Seed is also moved when the pithy fruits float in water, and infestations along waterways and flood zones have occurred.

The sticky seeds can also be spread by feral animals and birds that feed on the fruit, and via contaminated fodder, produce, soil and equipment.

Habitat

Reduces biodiversity by displacing native plants and disrupting ecological processes. Its foliage is unpalatable to livestock, thus reducing carrying capacities, however cattle eat the fruit and spread viable seeds in manure. Thorny tickets of the plant create a physical barrier for animals, preventing access to shade and water.

The plant is a host for many diseases and pests of cultivated crops, and it contains solasodine, which is poisonous to humans.

If not controlled, a few plants will form a hectare-sized thicket in 6 months, with each plant producing 150 fruit containing 45,000 seeds each year.

Herbicides kill the plants, but do not kill the seeds inside the fruit. In the USA, this plant infested over half a million hectares in 5 years. In NSW, it is critical to achieve site-based eradication of this plant before it becomes widespread.

Tropical soda apple *Solanum viarum*



Control

Inappropriate control efforts can accidentally spread this weed.

TSA reproduces from via seed and can regenerate from root material. Remove all seed and bag it for disposal prior to any treatments. Young seedlings and older plants can be manually removed, making sure that the roots are grubbed out. For larger areas, an overall spray is recommended in conjunction with spot spraying for smaller patches or more inaccessible plants.

For more information, visit: <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/TropicalSodaApple#control>

Similar weeds in the *Solanum* family



Apple of Sodom
(*Solanum linnaeanum*)



Devil's apple
(*Solanum capsicoides*)



Giant devil's fig
(*Solanum chrysotrichum*)

How you can help

Report suspected sightings.

Contact your local Weed Biosecurity Officer for positive identification on (02) 6623 3800, or go to rous.nsw.gov.au/report-a-weed



Seen it?



Snap it.



Send it!



For further information contact:

Rous County Council
02 6623 3800

www.rous.nsw.gov.au

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