Mexican devil

Ageratina adenophora

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Asteraceae (daisy)

Also known as
Eupatorium, *Eupatorium adenophorum*, *Eupatorium glandulosum*

Where is it originally from?
South America

Photo: Trevor James

What does it look like?
Erect, many-stemmed herb to subshrub (<1-2 m) with a perennial fibrous rootstock. Stems often die back in winter, are densely covered in stalked sticky hairs, are usually purple, become woody with age, have branches in opposite pairs, and often have galls which are formed by a parasitic fly. Diamond-shaped leaves (55-80 x 35-70 mm) with irregularly round-toothed edges are in opposite pairs along the stems. Dense clusters of small, white flowers (5-7 mm diameter, Aug-Dec) are followed by 5-angled black seeds (1.8 mm long).

Are there any similar species?
Mistflower (*A. riparia*) is similar.

Photo: Trevor James

Why is it weedy?
Dense habit, overtops groundcovers and small shrubs, long-lived, quick maturing, and produces many highly viable, well dispersed (probably short-lived) seed. Drooping stems can take root where they touch the ground. Toxic, so usually shunned by livestock. Tolerant of moderate shade, damage and grazing, salt, most soils, drought and damp. Invades rough pastureland, strips of land along waterways, wetlands and roadsides.

How does it spread?
Seed travels a long distance by wind and is also spread in water.

What damage does it do?
Forms dense colonies, preventing the seedlings of native species from establishing in a wide range of habitats. Invades strips of land on the margins of waterbodies, replacing vulnerable species, and can impede water flow in swamps, causing flooding.

Photo: Trevor James

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Lightly shaded frost-free areas: forest edges, shrublands, wetlands, streamsides, open forest, inshore and offshore islands, gumlands, slips, alluvial flats, coast and estuaries.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Dig or pull out small infestations. Expose roots.
2. Foliar Spray - Apply either glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient at 20ml/L knapsack) plus organosilicone penetrant (2ml/L), to cover entire plant. Note: Glyphosate overspray will kill other (desirable) plants OR Apply Metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient at 0.5g/1L knapsack or 20g/100L gun and hose) plus organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L) Note: overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts.
3. Biocontrol - For information regarding biocontrol agents for Mexican devil please visit: www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/managing-invasive-species/weed-biocontrol/projects-agents/biocontrol-projects/mexican-devil-weed
CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Permanently exclude livestock and control vertebrate pests to allow native species to provide competition for this weed.

Interplanting with taller, shade-loving species can help in shady areas, but in open, moderately-lit sites, continuing control will be needed. In low-growing habitats, dense groundcover planting may be necessary. Minimise disturbance as seed bank reinfests bared areas.