Lantana

Lantana camara subsp. *aculeata*

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Verbenaceae (teak, verbena, puriri)

Also known as
Lantana scabrida, *Camara vulgaris*, wild sage, red-flowered sage

Where is it originally from?
Tropical America

Photo: Trevor James

What does it look like?
Smelly scrambling evergreen shrub (<4-5 m) with woody taproot with laterals that sucker when broken. Young stems are 4-angled, hairy and prickly, and older stems are rounded, woody, much branched, and brittle. Hairy, ovalish leaves (3-9 cm long) in opposite pairs along the stems, very wrinkled, and have toothed edges. Conspicuous flat flower heads (2-3 cm across, all year round) with many tiny tubular flowers, each cream, yellow, orange, pink, red, purple or mixtures of these, changing colour as they mature, are followed by small, clustered, berry-like fruits, green ripening to juicy purple-black, contain one small pale seed per fruit.

Photo: Trevor James

Are there any similar species?
Other *L. camara* cultivars and crosses. *Lantana montevidensis* is low growing or prostrate, has smaller leaves and purple or white flowers, and is occasionally weedy.

Why is it weedy?
Produces many, well-dispersed seeds, is long-lived, and forms dense thickets that exclude other species. It is also allelopathic (produce toxins that poison the soil around it) so other species cannot replace it. Extremely versatile in habitat preferences, preferring well drained soils and high rainfall but thriving in clay also. Tolerates drought, moderate shade, and fire, but is susceptible to hard frost. Poisonous (not grazed).

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

How does it spread?
Seeds are spread by birds, and suckering roots allow thickets to remain dense. Roots and seeds are spread in contaminated soil, dumped vegetation, and common sources are gardens, roadsides, and waste areas.

What damage does it do?
Totally smothers and replaces all other species on the ground, causing permanent loss of habitat.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Most low-growing plant communities, disturbed and regenerating bush in warmer regions, inshore islands, cliffs, gumlands, foreshores, and bush margins, especially in northern North Island.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Hand pull small plants, or dig out entire plant including roots (all year round): Burn, dispose of to refuse or leave on site to rot down
Note: Generally not recommended as roots left in ground will resprout unless all fragments removed. Only recommended for small plants and where herbicides cannot be used.
2. Cut and paste (all year round) - Cut the stem/trunk as close to the ground as possible and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply either glyphosate gel (120g/L strength) or metsulfuron gel (10g/l strength) or picloram gel (43g/l strength) to the entire cut stem,
When a gel is inadequate apply a solution of diesel and triclopyr (20:1 diesel:triclopyr) or commercial formulations (120g triclopyr/l of oil, or product containing triclopyr and picloram 50ml/L water mix) can be used. Apply the mixture over the entire exposed surface of the cut stump, i.e. top and sides.
3. Foliar spray - Apply herbicide using a hand held sprayer/knapsack to plants <1m tall, or gun and hose for larger infestations. Use the adjuvant recommended on the label.

Apply glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) herbicide at at rate of 20ml/L plus organosilicone penetrant (2ml/L) to cover entire plant. Note: Glyphosate overspray will kill other (desirable) plants.
OR picloram/triclopyr herbicide (picloram 100g/l and triclopyr 300g/l active ingredient at 6ml/L) to thoroughly wet all parts of plant. Note: Triclopyr and picloram herbicides are 'grass friendly' but overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants. Picloram has residual activity in the soil which may leach and kill other plants. Do not use under and around other (desirable) broadleaf plants.
4. Biocontrol - For information about biocontrol agents for lantana please visit:
https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/managing-invasive-species/weed-biocontrol/projects-agents/biocontrol-projects/lantana
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?
Physical removal largely ineffective as root fragments sucker where broken. Cut stems resprout. Recovers well after fire. Reseeds in bared areas after spraying. Avoid root disturbance if possible when controlling. Check all treated sites for seedlings and suckers. Don't replant for two years after all plants destroyed. Seed longevity usually low. Replant with dense cover and constantly check for new seedlings.