

MOTH PLANT

Araujia hortorum

Management programme

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive containment (Taupō & Rotorua)	Sustained control (rest of region)	Site-led
-----------	-------------	----------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	----------

Impacts

Economic	Biodiversity	Soil resources	Water quantity/ quality
Human health	Social and cultural wellbeing	Amenity/recreation	Animal welfare

Objectives

Reduce the amount of moth plant and the number of locations that have it within the Taupō and Rotorua districts and reduce its impact on nearby land elsewhere in the Waikato region.

Why is it a pest?

Moth plant grows from a short taproot (main root) and other weak shallow roots. It prefers loose, fertile soils in warmer, wet areas. The self-fertile vines are spread mainly by their wind-borne seeds. When the pods dry out, they split open and release large numbers of seeds attached to silky threads. The seeds can germinate in high light and semi-shade and establish long distances from any seed source. Moth plant vines can smother and kill desirable plants and prevent regeneration in coastal environments, on cliffs, in shrubland and along forest tracks and margins and in urban areas.

Moth plant is established in Hamilton and many northern parts of the region including parts of the Coromandel. While moth plant only occurs in certain parts of the Taupō and Rotorua districts within the Waikato region, the impact of this pest may be significant in these areas.

Responsibility for control

Taupō and Rotorua district (within the Waikato region)

Waikato Regional Council is responsible for controlling moth plant in the Taupō and Rotorua districts (within the Waikato region). If you think you've seen it, call us – don't try to control it yourself.

All occupiers are encouraged to report sightings of moth plant on properties in this part of the region (rule MOT(TR)-1 of the **Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032**) and to liaise with the Waikato Regional Council in areas where control programmes are in place.

Waikato region (outside Rotorua and Taupō districts)

All occupiers in the Waikato region (outside of the Rotorua and Taupō districts) are responsible for controlling moth plant on their property within 50 metres of a shared boundary where that neighbouring land is being managed for environmental values (rule GNR MOT-1 of the RPMP 2022-2032). Occupiers need to be good neighbours and do the same so that their neighbour's control efforts are not fruitless.

Developers

If moth plant is present on a property that is to be subdivided or developed, there are additional rules and requirements that apply under section 6.6 of the RPMP 2022-2032.

Moth plant is banned from being sold, propagated, distributed, or included in commercial displays.

What does it look like?

Moth plant is an evergreen vine climbing to 6m high. The plant looks different as it ages: slender young vines become woody as the plant matures and starts to branch.



Flower

- Clusters of small cream to pink bell-shaped tubular flowers are produced between December and May.



Fruit/seed

- Large pear-shaped choko-like fruit (pods) are produced during summer and autumn that contain numerous seeds, each attached to silky threads.
- Seed pods dry and split in half to release the numerous seeds.
- Fruit can release a poisonous milk-like, skin irritating sap (latex) when cut or damaged.
- Seeds are poisonous if eaten.



Leaves/stems

- Leaves are opposite, 3cm-12cm long.
- Smooth leaves are dark green on the upper surface, and downy greyish-green on the underside.
- Downy, flexible, twining stems also contain poisonous milky sap.

How can I control moth plant?

You can only control moth plant yourself on land in the Waikato region outside Taupō and Rotorua districts. If you live within the Taupō and Rotorua districts, please call Waikato Regional Council and report any sightings of moth plant (ph 0800 800 401).

Physical control (all year)

- Best results are achieved between December and February before any pods are produced.
- Pull out seedlings. Hoe or dig out mature plants, removing as many roots as possible.
- Leave any detached vines in the host tree/hedge to wither and die.
- Remove all seed pods and take them to a refuse transfer station to prevent further spread. Do not burn the pods, compost them or leave them lying around, as seeds might spread.
- Revisit the site after three to five days when missed plants will be obvious. Dig out any remaining vines.

Herbicide control (summer to autumn)

Remove all seed pods from the vine(s) before applying herbicide. As above, do not burn or compost the removed pods or leave them lying around. Take them to a refuse transfer station instead.

Cut vine treatment (for smaller infestations)

- Cut stems 20cm above the ground, then coat the stem and hanging ends liberally with herbicide. Herbicide must be applied immediately after the cut is made. Some herbicides are available in a bottle or gel form, making application easy and convenient. To purchase the herbicide, visit your local hardware, rural supply store or garden centre.

Spray application (for larger infestations)

- Spray the plant and totally cover leaf surfaces with herbicide. Apply the herbicide carefully to avoid serious damage to other plants you want to keep. Apply during the active growing season (spring to autumn) for best results.

Management

After initial control, it is important to:

- check the site again at least annually to control any new seedlings and/or regrowth
- stop weeds invading the site by replanting with non-pest plants (preferably native plants) once the pest plant is no longer a problem.



More information

Advice

For advice and additional information on control methods, call our pest plant staff on freephone 0800 800 401.

Chemical company representatives, farm supply stores, garden centres or the Weedbusters website can also be good sources for advice.

Publications

The following publications are available from the Waikato Regional Council. Contact us to request a copy (freephone 0800 800 401).

- National Pest Plant Accord (Manual of plants banned from sale, propagation and distribution) (free)
- Plant Me Instead! (Plants to use in place of pest plants) (free)

Web

- *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/RPMP
- *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy