

Controlling Calotrope in Lakeland through Partnerships

November 2015

Calotrope (*Calotropis procera*) is a spreading shrub which oozes milky sap when any part is cut or broken. It is known to invade roadsides and waterways, and disturbed land – particularly land which has been previously cultivated and heavily grazed.

Calotrope was introduced to Australia as an ornamental plant and is also known as rubber bush, kapok tree and cabbage tree. It is poisonous to humans, and is known to be poisonous to cattle when they are under stress (such as from mustering). It is not currently a declared species under Queensland legislation, but its control in Cook Shire is a priority as conditions in the Shire are favourable for the spread of this introduced plant.



The large green inflated fruit of Calotrope

Description

- Spreading shrub or small tree growing up to 4m high
- Oozes milky sap when any part is cut or broken
- Stems smooth and pale greyish-green
- Mature stems have corrugated bark, cork-like in appearance and texture
- Grey-green leaves attach in opposite pairs directly to the stem
- Leave large, 10-20cm long and 4-10cm wide, with a short pointed tip and heart-shaped base
- Flowers grow in groups in the forks of uppermost leaves, with up to 15 flowers per group
- Five-petalled waxy flowers are white with purple tips inside and a central purplish crown
- Large green inflated fruit is rounded at the base and pointed at the tip, similar to a mango
- Fruit grows 8-12cm long and almost as wide
- Seeds have tufts of long, silky hairs at one end

(<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industry/agriculture/species/non-declared-pests/weeds/calotrope>)

Grey-green leaves are large and attach in opposite pairs directly to the stem



Mature stems have corrugated bark, cork-like in appearance and texture



Controlling Calotrope in Lakeland through Partnerships

In November 2015, Cape York NRM's Sustainable Industries Officer and Landcare Facilitator partnered with Cook Shire Council Biosecurity staff and workers from Kureen Farming at Lakeland, to control an infestation of Calotrope spreading westward to Laura.

The weed spread occurs as prevailing winds blow the seeds westwards. The seeds are light with long, silky hairs at one end, so they are easily carried by the wind.

The team used the cut stump control method, one of several methods recommended for control by the Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Stumps were cut at knee height, and the cut surface was then sprayed using herbicide and diesel according to DAF recommendations. The basal area was then sprayed to ground level.

When eradication of weeds is difficult and resource intensive, containment is the preferred management option. 'Containment' aims to prevent a weed from spreading into new areas. The containment of Calotrope in this area commenced roadside at the most western point of the infestation, approximately 20 kilometres west of Lakeland. The work continued eastward towards its source. Approximately 13 kilometres of Calotrope was controlled on the northern side of the Peninsula Development Road, and 9 kilometres on the southern side of the road.

Management of Calotrope will need to be ongoing to contain the weed. This important partnership between Cape York NRM, Cook Shire Council and Kureen Farming shows a willingness to share resources for better management, and cost reduction, and to help improve farm productivity in the Lakeland area.

For more information on Calotrope and its management, please visit www.daf.qld.gov.au

This project is supported by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme, the Queensland Government, Kureen Farming and Cook Shire Council.



Five-petaled waxy flowers are white with purple tips inside and a central purplish crown, and grow in groups in the forks of uppermost leaves



The light-weight seeds are easily carried by the wind, which is why containment is the preferred method of control, aiming to prevent weed spreading to new areas



This project is supported by Cape York NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.



CONTACT US:

47-49 Maunds Road | PO Box 907

Atherton QLD 4883 | 1300 132 262

admin@capeyorknrm.com.au

www.capeyorknrm.com.au