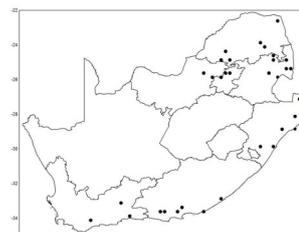


# ARC-PPRI FACT SHEETS ON INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS AND THEIR CONTROL IN SOUTH AFRICA

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**MOTHER-OF-MILLIONS** (*Bryophyllum delagoense*), also sometimes called chandelier plant, is an erect, succulent perennial, which is native to Madagascar. It was imported into South Africa as a garden ornamental, but has escaped cultivation to become a serious invader in many parts of the country. Plants reach up to 1.2 m high, and may be leafless or almost leafless while flowering (i). The leaves are grey-green, flecked with contrasting colour, cylindrical, up to 130 mm long and up to 6 mm wide, and produce plantlets at their tips (ii). Attractive tubular flowers, which range in colour from pale orange to magenta (iii), are borne in clusters in mid-winter. These are followed by fruit follicles with numerous small seeds. Mother-of-millions is a declared invader in South Africa and must be controlled, or eradicated where possible. Two closely related plants, *Bryophyllum proliferum* (green mother-of-millions) (iva) and *Bryophyllum pinnatum* (cathedral bells) (ivb), are also declared invaders in South Africa. A further two species, *B. fedtschenkoi* and *B. daigremontianum*, which have not yet been declared but that also have the potential to become invasive, should be removed and destroyed to protect the environment and prevent their spread.



## THE PROBLEM

These plants are extremely hardy, and will survive and reproduce in a variety of conditions including extended periods of drought. As a result, they are able to outcompete indigenous vegetation and eventually displace it. The plants reproduce readily from seed, which can remain viable in the soil for several years, and also from the plantlets that develop on individual leaves. New infestations develop from seeds or plantlets that have been spread by birds, animals, humans, water and garden refuse. In South Africa, infestations are commonly seen on hot and dry rocky ridges, savanna, urban areas and, less frequently, in pastures. All parts of the plant are extremely poisonous to livestock and, if ingested, result in paralysis and death. Each of the *Bryophyllum* species mentioned in this fact sheet is toxic.

## THE SOLUTION

Although no herbicide has been registered specifically for mother-of-millions, herbicides designed for use on broad-leaved plants may be effective with regular follow up. Herbicide should be applied when the plants are in flower, since they are not only more visible, but spraying at this time will also prevent them from setting seed. Small infestations can be removed by hand, taking care not to dislodge the plantlets at the leaf-tips, after which the plants should be burned or allowed to decompose in black bags to prevent spread. Fire may also be effective in dense infestations. At this stage, no biological control agents have been identified for use in South Africa. In the meantime, landowners and gardeners are urged to remove *Bryophyllum* species from their property and replace them with one of the many indigenous succulents available. A good option is pig's ear (*Cotyledon orbiculata*), which has attractive foliage, is also hardy, and has similar flowers.



**environmental affairs**

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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