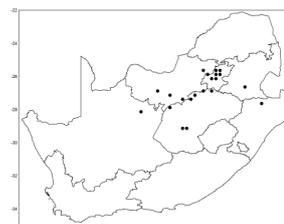


ARC-PPRI FACT SHEETS ON INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS AND THEIR CONTROL IN SOUTH AFRICA

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CHILEAN INKBERRY (also known as green cestrum) (*Cestrum parqui*) is an ornamental shrub or small tree that originates from Brazil and Chile. It is evergreen, and generally reaches a height of 2-3 metres. The green leaves are up to 30 mm wide and 100 mm long, occur alternately on the branches, are pointed at each end (i), and produce an unpleasant odour when crushed. Greeny-yellow (ii), and sometimes purple-brown, trumpet-shaped flowers occur in axillary and terminal clusters from October to May. Although these may emit an unpleasant odour during the day, it may be quite pleasant in the evening. Flowers are followed by green berries that turn blackish (iii) as they ripen. Chilean inkberry is a category 1b declared invader in South Africa and must be controlled, or eradicated where possible.



THE PROBLEM

Although Chilean inkberry was originally brought into South Africa for use as a garden ornamental, it has escaped cultivation and spread through a few provinces where it is capable of invading almost any habitat. The entire plant is poisonous and has been known to kill livestock, and even humans who ate parts of it. However, the ripe berries are readily consumed by birds that aid in seed dispersal. This fact is evident even in suburban gardens, especially in Gauteng, where Chilean inkberry plants seem to appear from nowhere and are difficult to eradicate because they merely sucker from the roots when cut down. In natural environments, dense infestations of Chilean inkberry may outcompete indigenous vegetation and eventually transform natural habitats.



THE SOLUTION

Unfortunately, no biological control agents have been released on Chilean inkberry in South Africa. And, while a herbicide has been registered for use on a different species of inkberry, none has been registered for Chilean inkberry. Thus, the only option for controlling infestations is to remove the plants manually. However, the roots are fleshy and must be removed entirely, or any root fragments will merely regrow. Despite its obvious invasive tendency, Chilean inkberry remains a popular garden plant in Gauteng because of its dense, evergreen habit and prolonged flowering period. To prevent further spread and protect our natural environment, these should be removed and replaced with one of the many indigenous shrubs available. A hardy, evergreen, indigenous alternative is the Cape honeysuckle (*Tecoma capensis*) that frequently flowers throughout the year, and which is available in yellow, (iv) orange and shrimp. But any good, indigenous nursery will be able to provide information on this, and other alternatives that are suited to your particular conditions.



environmental affairs

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Environmental Affairs
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