

Mini data sheet on *Araujia sericifera* (Apocynaceae)

Added in 2008 - Deleted in 2012

Reasons for deletion:

Araujia sericifera was added to the EPPO Alert List in 2008 but as no immediate risk was perceived, it was transferred to the Observation List in 2012.

Why

Araujia sericifera (Apocynaceae) is a woody evergreen vine native to South America. The plant was introduced during the 19th century as an ornamental and textile plant. Its common name is "Cruel plant", as moths, bees and butterflies are often trapped and killed by the secretion within the flowers. Because *A. sericifera* has shown invasive behaviour where it has been introduced elsewhere in the world and is still limited in the EPPO region, it can be considered as a potential emerging invader in Europe.

Geographical distribution

EPPO Region: France (Corse), Greece, Israel, Italy, Portugal (Azores, Madeira), Spain.

Africa: South Africa (Free State, Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, Western Cape).

North America: USA (California, Georgia).

South America (native): Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay.

Oceania: Australia (Australia Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, Western Australia), New Zealand.

Morphology

A. sericifera is a climbing, evergreen vine reaching up to 10 m long and containing irritating and smelly sap. Stems are flexible, tough, and woody near the base. The opposed leaves are ovate-oblong, dark green and glabrous above, pale green and hairy below, 3-12 cm long and 2-6 cm wide. The bell shaped flowers are white, pale pink or creamish, and have corollas of 2-3 cm diameter. They occur in clusters of 2 to 4, and can trap and kill insects. Fruits are deeply grooved follicles, spongy, green if young, up to 12 cm long and 6 cm wide. They split to release about 400 black seeds of 7-8 mm length, each with a tuft of silky hairs of approximately 25 mm length.

Biology and ecology

The vine grows vigorously. The large quantities of seeds produced are viable for at least 5 years. Seeds are thought to be dispersed by the wind and by water.

Habitats

Banks of continental waters, riverbanks/canalsides (dry river beds), forests, arable land, permanent crops (e.g. vineyards, fruit tree and berry plantations, olive), green urban areas, including parks, gardens, sport and leisure facilities, road and rail networks and associated land, other artificial surfaces (wastelands).

Impact

A. sericifera has dense foliage that smothers native shrubs and trees. Dense infestations prevent regeneration of native species. The heavy weight of fruiting vines can break tree branches. The sap of the plant is poisonous and causes skin irritation.

Control

Seedlings and smaller plants can be hand pulled or dug out, roots should be removed to prevent regrowth. Larger stems are cut at ground level, and the cut stumps treated with herbicide. Large infestations may be controlled by foliar sprays. Removed parts of the plant have to be gathered and destroyed, especially the fruits. Operators have to protect their skin and eyes from the abrasive milky sap of the plant by wearing long sleeves, gloves and protective glasses. A follow-up programme is necessary to control regrowth and seedlings for several years.

Sources

- Agricultural Geo-Referenced Information System – South Africa – Weeds and Invasive Plants. <http://www.agis.agric.za/wip>
- Australia's Virtual Herbarium. <http://www.rbq.vic.gov.au/cgi-bin/avhpublic/avh.cgi?session=113412310528776>
- Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventories for Europe (DAISIE). <http://www.europe-aliens.org/>
- Sanz Elorza M, Dana Sánchez ED, Sobrina Vesperinas E Eds (2004) Atlas de las plantas alóctonas invasoras en España. Dirección General para la Biodiversidad. Madrid, 80 pp.
- Tutin TG, Heywood VH, Burges NA, Moore DM, Valentine DH, Walters SM and Webb DA (1964/80) *Flora Europaea*, Vol 1-5. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (GB).
- USDA - Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN). <http://www.ars-grin.gov/cgi-bin/npgs/html/taxon.pl?3841>
- Weber, E (2003) Invasive Plant Species of the World. CABI Publishing Wallingford, (GB) pp. 548, p. 51.