

# WOODY WEEDS



## Lantana

*Lantana camara* and other garden varieties such as *Lantana montevidensis* (creeping lantana)



**Origin:** Lantana, originally from Central and South America, was introduced to Australia as an ornamental garden plant. It occurs in a range of habitats including open exposed hill sides, coastal dunes, rainforests and bushland.

**Identification:** Lantana is a woody shrub heavily branched which grows in dense clumps or thickets and can also behave like a climbing vine. The stems are square in shape and are covered in small prickles. Leaves grow opposite to each other along the stem with round toothed edges which, when crushed produce a distinct odour. Leaves are bright green on the surface and a paler green on the underside. Flowers cluster and range in colour from light cream to yellow, white, pink, orange and red. Fruits are berry like, start out green and when ripe turn to dark purple to black in colour.

**Flowering and seeding:** Most of the year.

**Dispersal:** Birds and animals spreading seed. Vegetatively by stems taking root as the plant spreads creating dense stands. Dumped garden waste. Poor quality mulch.

**Control:** Hand pull seedlings, cut and paint larger plants cutting branches into small pieces and allowing to mulch down on site. Follow up required to monitor any re-shooting.

**Tip:** Lantana seedlings can often be mistaken with native peach *Trema tomentosa*, which has alternate leaves as opposed to paired. Leaf odour can also be used as an indicator by crushing the leaves as lantana has a distinct odour. Lantana is often used as habitat by native fauna, and also when removed can result in even more invasive weeds taking its place, so be mindful when considering the rate at which you are removing this weed and your ability to carry out follow up maintenance. It is also often beneficial to leave lantana on the edges of rainforest remnants to prevent weeds blowing into the open understorey, and in maintaining the moist habitat for ferns by keeping out drying winds.