

# landscaping plants to avoid

Exotic plants are affecting our natural environment in the Cairns region. Many of these harmful species have escaped from backyards. You can help by learning more about what plants to avoid in you home and garden. Some of the plants may surprise you, but they have the potential to become weeds.

## water plants



### WATER LETTUCE

*Pistia stratiotes*

- This floating plant has a lettuce-like structure covered in white velvety hairs
- The plant restricts water flow, increases water loss and is a breeding ground for mosquitoes.



### WATER HYACINTH

*Eichhornia crassipes*

- This free-floating plant has surface runners, buoyant glossy leaves, and attractive purple to mauve flowers
- The plant reduces water oxygen levels, increases water loss and is a breeding ground for mosquitoes.



### ALLIGATOR FLAG WEED

*Thalia geniculata*

- This plant consists of upright clumps of stems and leaves, has small purple flowers and is usually found near water
- This species is one of the greatest threats to waterways, wetlands and floodplains.



### SALVINIA *Salvinia molesta*

- This floating fern has small green leaves in pairs, that are covered in water-repellent hairs, and a large root system resembling wet hair
- The plant negatively impacts water quality, creates a haven for mosquitoes, and increases water evaporation.

## cacti



*Opuntia (Prickly Pear)*

### OPUNTIOID CACTI

- Opuntioid cacti consist of three genera of cacti, varying in size and appearance
- The drought resistant plants have thick glossy skin, can have spikes, flowers or colourful bulbs
- The cacti store large amounts of water
- The plants can cause damage to stock and native animals, provide refuge for pests, and displace native plants.



*Austrocylindropuntia*



*Cylindropuntia*

## indoor plants



### ARROWHEAD VINE

*Syngonium podophyllum*

- The plant has shiny green-white leaves in the shape of an arrow
- It is classified as a weed because of its invasive nature and climbing ability.



### MOTHER-IN-LAW'S TONGUE

*Dracaena trifasciata*

- The plant has sword-shaped green-yellow leaves
- This invading plant has been classified as an Environmental Weed in Queensland.



### DEVIL'S IVY

*Epipremnum aureum*

- The plant has yellow-green pointed leaves
- The weed has an invasive nature and climbing ability.

# LANDSCAPING PLANTS TO AVOID

## garden plants



### SHOE-BUTTON ARDISIA

*Ardisia elliptica*

- This shrub has small red to deep purple-black berries, small pinkish flowers and long, bright green leaves
- It grows quickly and is shade tolerant, thus displacing native groundcover species.



### YELLOW TRUMPET VINE

*Allamanda cathartica*

- The vine has yellow trumpet shaped flowers, glossy green leaves and red stems
- A sterile hybrid, *Allamanda cathartica* 'Compacta Sunee' can be purchased that is safe for gardening.



### GLOW VINE

*Saritaea magnifica*

- This climbing plant has purple bell-shaped flowers with a white or light pink interior, and leathery green leaves
- The vine is classified as an Environmental Weed in Northern Queensland.



### BLUE THUNBERGIA *Thunbergia grandiflora*

- This vine can grow up to 15m tall, has blue, violet or mauve trumpet-shaped flowers, large tuberous roots (roots that hold nutrients like a potato), and leaves with large teeth
- The climbing plant can smother other plants, pulling plants over due to the vine's weight or reduce light levels and kill native plants
- The tuberous roots can damage paths, fences and foundations.

### YELLOW & ORANGE HELICONIA

*Heliconia psittacorum*

- Yellow or orange waxy flowers and large green leaves dominate this plant
- This plant is becoming a serious weed in waterways and other wet areas from the spreading underground system of roots and seeds.



## edibles



### WATER SPINACH

*Ipomoea aquatica*

- An edible plant popular in South-East Asian cooking
- This plant has bright purple to white flowers and long thin leaves.



### COCONUT PALM

*Cocos nucifera*

- A large palm tree with a slender trunk, large green fronds and coconuts
- This is the most common plant in illegal green waste dumped within the region.

## spreading pests

### GREEN WASTE

- Dumping green waste over your fence, or in bushlands or creeks introduces pest plants into these areas
- Green waste disposal:
  - Recycle your green waste through composting or using it as mulch
  - Four times a year Cairns Regional Council offers free green waste disposal. Check the council website for dates.



### YELLOW CRAZY ANTS

- Spread through movement of soil, pot plant trading and illegal dumping
- May spray formic acid when disturbed
- The ants merge colonies to form super colonies that can easily take over and displace other native species.