



Cardiospermum grandiflorum BALLOON VINE

SEPTEMBER 2008

Balloon Vine is a perennial, highly invasive climber. It can reach heights in excess of 10 m and produces thousands of seeds annually. Infestations can be extensive but removal is relatively straightforward.

DESCRIPTION

- **Stems** are hairy, initially thin and green with ribs often streaked red. In maturity the stem changes to pale brown before thickening to become woody.
- **Leaves** are alternate on the stem and form nine leaflets in-groups of three with the middle leaflet usually the largest. They are 2-7 cm long, 1-5 cm wide, soft and hairy with broadly toothed edges, obvious veins on both sides and grow on a hairy stalk.
- **Flowers** are small, white and grow in dense clusters on long stalks. Tendrils are located below the flower head. Blossom appears in summer.
- **Seed capsule** is almost spherical, initially green and maturing to light brown over autumn. When ripe it splits into three segments each with a single, black, dimpled seed.
- **Roots** are shallow with a long, woody taproot.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Balloon Vine forms a smothering curtain over existing vegetation. The seed is spread by water and wind. Balloon Vine smothers the vegetation growing in open sunny habitats as well as moist gullies.

HABITAT

Balloon Vine prefers watercourses, gullies and warm, moist forest and woodland. It grows best with good light levels but tolerates moderate shade and occasional waterlogged soils. Invasion often starts at a moist, sunny bushland edge.



Flowers and immature seed capsules.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Balloon Vine was introduced from the tropical regions of the Americas, Africa and Asia as a garden ornamental. Balloon Vine is currently found in eastern NSW from the Illawarra northwards and is also located in Queensland and Western Australia.

DECLARATION

Balloon Vine is considered an environmental weed in Sutherland Shire. However, it is still important that environmental weeds be destroyed, as they can also affect human health, or can be invasive in the natural environment killing the native flora and reducing the natural biodiversity. Native animals may also be affected due to the loss of their natural habitat.

CONTROL

- **Seedlings and small plants** can be hand pulled or dug out but ensure the taproot is removed to prevent regrowth.
- **Thin vines** can be pulled down or cut and left to dry in the canopy. Lay the lower sections of the stems on the ground and spray with a herbicide.
- **Large vines** can be severed and left to dry in the canopy. The taproot can be poisoned or dug out. An alternate approach is to use the Stem/Scrape or Cut and Paint methods.

After removal and treatment follow-up work for approximately 18 months is critical.

Seedlings must be removed as they emerge. Plants can also be sprayed with non-selective herbicides but care must be taken to avoid damage to desirable plant species and contamination of waterways where the vine commonly grows.



Balloon Vine smothers native plants.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
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