



SEPTEMBER 2008

Ageratina adenophora CROFTON WEED

An escaped garden ornamental, Crofton weed is one of the most common weeds in the Sutherland Shire. It is common in moist areas that receive stormwater runoff.

DESCRIPTION

Crofton weed is a perennial herb growing from 1 to 3 metres high as a tufted bushy plant. It is an aggressive non-woody plant and grows as clusters of long upright purplish stems. The stems are rounded initially covered with short reddish hairs and turning woody with age. Crofton weed has dark green opposite leaves that are triangular in shape approximately 5-8 cm long and 3-7.5 cm wide with serrated edges and prominent veins. The white flowers are tubular and about 3.5 mm long and 5 mm in diameter. The flowers cluster in dense terminal heads that form a spectacular display in early spring. The seeds are fluffy dark brown or black, angular and 2 mm long. They are topped by a pappus of 5-10 fine white hairs, each about 4 mm in length. Seeds are shed between October and mid-January.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Crofton weed favours moist areas, especially along drainage lines. It grows in large dense clusters and will eventually out-compete all other plants in an area and form a monoculture. Seeds are spread by wind and water and the plant can rapidly occupy large areas if conditions are suitable. As well as out-competing native vegetation Crofton weed is highly toxic to horses, and can be fatal if large amounts are eaten.

HABITAT

Crofton weed grows well in both sunny and heavily shaded environments. It thrives in damp areas such as along creek banks and in places where natural drainage has been altered as well as in forest clearings and frost-free environments. Crofton weed is found commonly near urban areas growing along roadsides, tracks, out-flow points of stormwater drainage and in abandoned cultivation and overgrazed areas.



Young Crofton weed plants.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

A native to Central America, Crofton weed was introduced to Sydney as a garden ornamental in 1872 from England. During the 1920s it was introduced to the NSW North Coast where it soon colonised much of the newly cleared lands on both sides of the NSW and Qld border. The seeds of the Crofton weed have a pappus of hairs that allows the seed to be easily spread by both wind and water. Other important means of dispersal include transportation as an impurity in agricultural produce, sand and soil, as well as on animals, vehicles and clothing. Currently, Crofton weed is almost restricted to the coastal strip from Sydney northward to Mary River, Qld.

DECLARATION

Crofton weed is an environmental weed in Sutherland Shire. It is important that environmental weeds be destroyed, as they can 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

For small areas, Crofton weed can easily be removed by hand pulling. Alternatively spraying patches with Glyphosate has proven effective. When using chemical methods please do so in accordance with the label recommendations and follow all safety directions as indicated on the label.



Crofton Weed forms dense stands.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
Bushcare or Greenweb Units
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Sutherland Shire
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