



Ochna serrulata **OCHNA**

SEPTEMBER 2008

There are several common names for this species; two frequently used names are the “Mickey Mouse Bush” and the “Bird’s Eye Bush”. The names are associated with the bright red sepals and black berries that are prominent features of this plant.

DESCRIPTION

An angular shrub which reaches a height of 2 metres. The stems are slightly rough and are finely spotted with light brown. Leaves are spirally arranged, narrow and oblong in shape, with a wavy surface and have finely toothed edges. Leaf pairs are alternate and 2.5 to 5 cm long. New bronze foliage can be seen when the plant flowers. Bright yellow flowers appear in spring about 3 cm in diameter, each with five petals. The petals fall off to reveal a fruit in the form of bright red sepals. Each sepal has four to five glossy green berries that ripen black in November to January. The fruit forms the appearance of the familiar “Mickey Mouse” face.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

With its large quantities of berries and flowers, Ochna has colonised bushland very quickly and grows in dense communities of large shrubs. Ochna suppresses the surrounding native plants in the bushland understorey by shading the surrounding area and competing for space, sunlight, water and nutrients.

HABITAT

Naturalised in Australia where it dominates the understorey of dry sclerophyll forest and riparian vegetation throughout most of coastal southeast Australia. It is abundantly found in parts of NSW north of the Illawarra.



Leaves have a wavy surface and finely toothed edges.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council



Often used as hedgerows.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

From South Africa, Ochna is a regular garden runaway in the Sydney area. It is a popular ornamental plant, often used as hedgerow and windbreaks. It has naturalised in bushland, as the bountiful supply of seeds in urban gardens is readily available to foraging birds.

DECLARATION

The Ochna plant 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 damage of their natural habitat.

CONTROL

Ochna is very difficult to eliminate as it has a tenacious root system. Even tiny seedlings are difficult to remove and should be done as early as possible. The roots have the ability to reshoot, so all the root system must be removed. Undiluted herbicide can be applied using the Scrape and Spray technique. Scrape all the stems at the base with a sharp knife and apply undiluted Glyphosate. Wait for the plant to defoliate and remove above ground parts. The cut and paint technique is usually unsuccessful with this plant.



Juvenile plant.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council