

MEDIA RELEASE

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Beautiful garden plant becomes environmental and agricultural hazard

Have you seen this plant? Its vibrant red, bell-shaped clusters of flowers make it hard to miss. Once a desirable garden succulent originating from Madagascar, Mother of Millions has now spread throughout southern Queensland, turning into a big problem for graziers and local governments.

This Weedbuster Week (6-13 October), land managers around the Miles district will have the opportunity to learn more about managing this invasive weed.

Lavinnia Fiedler is a Weed and Pest Animal Technical Officer with local natural resource management group, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC). She said, "due to its succulent, cactus like nature, this plant adapts well in dry areas, establishing quickly by dropping small plantlets from the edge of its leaves, and from seeds that form within pods amongst the flower clusters."

Mother of Millions is highly toxic to stock, even causing death, and out-competes native pastures and habitat, which is why it is such a problem to both production and the environment.

"Early settlers found the plant a very hardy and colourful addition to their gardens, especially since water access was not as convenient as it is today," she said.

"Since then, the plant has spread to grazing areas, sometimes in plague proportions."

QMDC, in partnership with the Murilla Shire Council and Biosecurity Queensland, will be hosting a Mother of Millions field day at the Leichhardt Centre, in Miles, on 10 October to help raise awareness about this weed invasion, and how to control it.

"The field day will be run in conjunction with Weedbuster Week, so it's good timing to bring ourselves up to date with the latest information and management techniques available," said Lavinnia.

The day will feature speakers from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks and Wildlife Services, Dow Elanco, and current research programs.

"The speakers will present on a number of topics to do with Mother of Millions, such as proposed biological control agents, African citrus thrip research, chemical control measures and monitoring research currently being conducted," Lavinnia said.

The field day is free, open to anyone interested in learning more about managing Mother of Millions, and will include lunch and a field trip to investigate the impacts of the recently discovered citrus thrip.

"Mother of Millions has long been a problem in this catchment. The drought has intensified the problem as the plant will often grow where others cannot," said Lavinnia.

For more information, or to RSVP, please contact Lavinnia Fiedler on 07 4622 3397 or 0428 737 995.

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Images



Caption: The bell-shaped flowers of the Mother of Millions weed – pretty, but deadly.



Caption: The fleshy, cactus-like leaves of this garden escapee make it easily adaptable to the Australian climate.