

Lantana camara

Largeleaf lantana

Lantana camara L.

Family: Verbenaceae

Description: Woody shrubs, aromatic, branched, to 10 ft tall, stems prickly, 4-angled. Leaves stiff, margins serrated, 2.5 inches long by 2 inches wide. Florets usually multicolored, yellow, orange, pink, violet, in hemispherical heads, 1 inch diameter. Fruits dark blue to black at maturity. A problem in dry to moist pastures, forests, and waste areas of all islands. *Lantana*, flexible or bending⁽¹⁷⁾, was the Latin name for *Viburnum*, a different plant with similar inflorescence and was applied to this genus⁽⁷⁰⁾; *camara*, Latin⁽⁶⁾ or West Indian⁽¹⁹⁾ for arch, possibly for shape of corolla tubes.

Distribution: An escaped ornamental originally from the West Indies, now a tropical and subtropical weed of pastures, forests, orchards, and wastelands of eastern Africa, South Africa, South Asia, the Pacific islands, Australia (where it was named one of Australia's 20 most unwanted weeds)⁽¹⁰⁾, and the Americas^(26, 31). It occurs on all the main Hawaiian islands, where it infests over 400,000 acres, and on Midway. It is a major pest of leeward pastures and some windward pastures. It is a major problem in the Kōke'e State Park on Kaua'i.

Environmental impact: Forms dense impenetrable stands in dry and mesic pastures and forests, crowding out native plants and forage grasses. The toxin lantadene induces photosensitivity in animals forced to graze it^(29, 75), although the New Zealand form lacks the toxin and is not toxic to sheep⁽²³⁾. In the Galapagos, it has taken over nesting grounds of the dark-rumped petrels on Floreana Island, making it difficult for the birds to enter and exit their burrows (Luis Ortiz, Charles Darwin Research Station, Galapagos, Ecuador).

Management: Anecdotal evidence suggests trampling during intensive grazing is effective because of the brittle wood of lantana. However, annual mowing is not effective in eliminating lantana. First plant subjected to biocontrol by any government agency. Over two dozen



biocontrol agents have been released to control it in Hawai'i with results varying from ineffective to spectacular. The most effective are the defoliating caterpillar *Hypena strigata*, the seed-destroying fly *Ophiomyia lantanae*, and the lace bug *Teleonemia scrupulosa*⁽¹⁸⁾. In places, infestations of lantana by biocontrol agents are universal, but the effect on the population is not obvious even after decades of once- or twice-annual cycles of defoliation. Yet some areas have been cleared of lantana, leading to a premature declaration of victory over it^(18, 26). Very sensitive to glyphosate applied foliarly⁽⁵²⁾. Metsulfuron may be effective if application is timed before annual droughts⁽⁴⁷⁾. Triclopyr ester applied basal bark effective but foliar application of triclopyr ineffective. Foliar applications of 2,4-D and dicamba ineffective; picloram effective. Soil application of tebuthiuron effective at 3 lb/acre⁽⁴⁸⁾; hexazinone in "hot spot" soil application effective. Kline and Duquenel⁽³⁰⁾ reported moderate control with triclopyr ester at 10% of product applied basal bark and triclopyr amine at 50% of product applied cut-surface. Imazapyr at 10% of product applied cut-surface and at 1% applied foliarly provided good control. Glyphosate applied basal bark with the surfactant Quiksorb® (Monsanto) looked promising in trials in Kona and Kaua'i but erratic in Hilo, a wetter site. Goats will control lantana (An Peischel). Isolated plants can be controlled by grubbing or pulling with care to remove all lateral roots. Burning without follow-up treatments is ineffective and may increase populations⁽⁶¹⁾.