

Melastoma candidum

Melastoma

Melastoma candidum D. Don
Syn. *M. malabathricum*

Family: Melastomataceae

Description: Branched shrub, 15 ft tall. Leaves opposite, 4 inches long by 2 inches wide with 5 prominent veins, upper surface rough, lower with silky hairs. Inflorescences of 2 or more flowers, each 1–3 inches diameter, lavender. Berries black, 0.5 inches long, 5-celled, seeds small, many, coiled appearance, more than 1000 seeds per fruit^(25, 70). In Java, fruits yield a black dye, roots a pink dye. Also had medical uses, and fruits and young leaves were eaten. Greek: *melas*, black; *stoma*, mouth (from eating fruit); *candidum*, hairy, shiny, whitish foliage^(5, 59, 70).

Distribution: Native to tropical Asia. Now a pest in tropical and subtropical Asia, Polynesia, Mauritius, and Taiwan to Australia. It is especially troublesome in tree crops in these areas. In Hawai'i it infests mesic to wet pastures and disturbed forests of Kaua'i and Hawai'i. An escaped ornamental, it was first collected on Kaua'i in 1928. Adapted to acid soils^(25, 70).

Environmental impact: Spread by birds, melastoma forms dense stands in wetter pastures and forests, shading out understory.



Management: Sensitive to hormone-type herbicides 2,4-D, dicamba, and triclopyr at 1 lb/acre, and to metsulfuron at 0.45 oz/acre. Sensitive to basal bark and stump bark applications of 2,4-D and triclopyr at 4% product in diesel.