

# Mikania vine

*Mikania micrantha*



Mikania vine (*Mikania micrantha*) is a rapidly growing, scrambling perennial vine with many branches. It has the potential to spread throughout humid regions of northern Australia, and poses a major threat to agricultural production and the environment in these areas. The weed has the ability to spread rapidly and smother native vegetation, crops and agricultural infrastructure.

If it becomes established in Australia, mikania vine has the potential to cause serious damage to agricultural industries (including sugarcane, tropical fruit and

vegetable production), as well as damage the natural environment and affect the habitat of native animals.

Mikania vine thrives in open areas as well as in partial shade and disturbed areas. It will also grow in deep shade although it is unlikely to flower in these areas. It can, however, grow up through a closed forest and become canopy emergent.

Importantly, when mixed with the soil, mikania vine debris produces toxins that inhibit the growth of other vegetation, such as native plants and agricultural crops.





Mikania vine (Photo: B. Waterhouse)

## Declaration details

Mikania vine is a declared Class 1 pest plant under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*.

All landholders are required by law to keep their land free of Class 1 pests. It is a serious offence to introduce, keep or sell Class 1 pests without a permit.

## Description and general information

### Habit

Mikania vine is a perennial creeper that will climb trees, shrubs and any other structure in the area. It is a herbaceous, sprawling and twining vine that smothers other vegetation and infrastructure. Mikania vine has a rapid growth rate and has been observed to grow 9 cm per day under ideal conditions. The lateral shoots will twine around its own main stem until other support is found. In the absence of support, mikania vine is prostrate and will form roots along any stems touching the ground.

Mikania vine will grow rapidly in the wet season and may die back to ground level in the dry season.

### Leaves and stems

The leaves of mikania vine are smooth and heart-shaped. They are 4–13 cm in length and taper to an acute point. The leaves have three main veins that arise from the base of the leaf. The leaf stalk is 2–8 cm long and the leaves are arranged in opposite pairs along the stem.

The stems of the mikania vine are slender, ribbed and bear fine, white hairs. The lateral stems are as vigorous as the main stem and it is often difficult to distinguish between the two.

### Flowers and seeds

The flowers of mikania vine are white to greenish-white and are produced in clusters mainly at the ends of stems growing in full sunlight. Each flower head is 4–6 mm long and contains four individual flowers.

Mikania vine produces tufted seeds which are equipped for wind dispersal. The seeds are black, 1.5–2 mm long, thin and five-angled. The seed tufts (pappus) consist of over 30 fine white hairs or bristles. The pappus is longer than the seed itself.

Mikania vine generally flowers during winter; however, plants will also flower heavily out of season in areas exposed to full sunlight.



Mikania vine flower (Photo: M. Gunther)



The heart-shaped mikania leaves are arranged in opposite pairs



The seed and pappus of mikania are only 6 mm in length

## Methods of spread

Mikania vine has the ability to reproduce both by seed and vegetatively. Mikania vine produces large quantities of seed (40 000 seeds per plant per year) that can be transported by wind, water, machinery or animals. The plant is highly successful at vegetative reproduction and young shoots may be easily transported by flood or machinery; small plant fragments containing a node readily produce roots when in contact with moist soil. All of these factors contribute to mikania vine's ability to spread rapidly across the landscape.

## Habitat and distribution

Mikania vine is native to Central and South America, and has become a serious weed in West Africa through to India, South-East Asia, Indonesia and the Pacific Islands.

Mikania vine was first found in Australia in 1998 at Ingham and Bingil Bay, and has since been detected at one location near Speewah, near Mareeba.

Mikania vine thrives in humid areas where rainfall exceeds 1500 mm per annum. It prefers areas with rich damp soils. The potential distribution in Australia includes the coastal regions of the Northern Territory and northern Western Australia, and much of eastern Queensland, extending into north-eastern New South Wales.

## Current status

Populations of mikania vine have been detected in the Hinchinbrook, Cassowary Coast, and Tablelands Regional Council areas of north Queensland.

Mikania vine is currently targeted for eradication under a national, cost-shared eradication program managed by Biosecurity Queensland (a business group of the Department of Employment, Economic Development, and Innovation).

## Control

There are no chemicals registered to specifically control mikania vine. All suspected infestations should be reported to Biosecurity Queensland, who will develop a site-specific eradication program with the relevant landholder.

## Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland (call 13 25 23 or visit our website at [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au)).



**Mikania smothering a banana crop in the Pacific Islands (Photo: Warea Orapa, Secretariat of the Pacific Community)**

Fact sheets are available from Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) service centres and our Customer Service Centre (telephone 13 25 23). Check our website at [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this fact sheet should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, DEEDI does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

Cover photograph courtesy of M. Buckman