



Lantana camara Fact Sheet

Lantana Camara

(*basukwa gwenyunyuyu / ubuhobe*)

This is a perennial, heavily-branched, bushy, thicket-forming shrub, that normally grows between 2 and 4 metres in height.

Due to its widespread distribution and negative impact on livestock, agriculture and the environment in general, *Lantana camara* is classified as a noxious weed in the Zimbabwe "Noxious Plants and Weeds Act".

Farmers are required by law to take measures to eliminate *Lantana camara* once they notice the presence of the weed in their fields and grazing lands.

Failure to comply attracts a penalty in the form of a fine.

Seed Dispersal

Fruit dispersal is mainly through birds, runoff and flowing rivers. Seed germination is improved when seed passes through the digestive system of birds and when soil temperatures are high. *Lantana camara* seeds are capable of surviving the hottest fires, so inappropriate burning will help spread the weed.

Habitat

This weed grows best in almost all soil types in open, un-shaded conditions, including edges of forest lands, cropped areas,

grazing lands, along rivers, wetlands, road sides, and forests recovering from fire and logging. However, the plant is susceptible to frosts and low temperatures; and cannot survive under dense, intact canopies.

Threat and Damage

1.) *Lantana camara* infests pastures, grazing lands, orchards and agricultural land reducing the economic viability of the areas invaded.

2.) High infestations can completely stall the regeneration of rangelands for several years resulting in extinction of some tree species and grasses important for livestock.

Extinction of certain tree species will also affect availability and access to other forest related non-wood products like honey, amacimbi, medicinal herbs and wildlife.

3.) Loss of crop and animal species of conservation significance.

4.) In agricultural lands, it also interferes with operations such as harvesting. *Lantana camara* berries (especially the unripe) and leaves are poisonous to cattle, buffalo, sheep, and goats, especially during drought when other feed is scarce.

In cattle, it causes pink nose disease, photophobia, diarrhoea and jaundice.

5.) It harbours mosquitoes which can cause serious health problems.

6.) Leads to down grading / rejection of harvested crops at marketing.

7.) It increases fuel load for fires.

Integrated Management

1.) Young plants less than a meter tall can be hand pulled after loosening the ground.

2.) For big plants, first chop down the above ground parts then completely stump / uproot the below ground parts to prevent the plant from regenerating.

3.) Burn the chopped down parts within the regulated burning period.

4.) Farmers are advised to destroy the weed before it flowers to prevent fruit formation which is the principal mode of propagation.

5.) Take care when clearing areas on steep land or near stream banks to prevent soil erosion.

6.) Avoid clearing or disturbing large areas at any one time to minimise land exposure to the forces of erosion such as wind and precipitation.

7.) Once an area is cleared, a suitable pasture mix or native species should be planted to re-establish ground cover and to provide competition for *Lantana camara* seedlings.

8.) Avoid overstocking and overgrazing.

Removing *Lantana camara*

1. Once you notice *Lantana camara* in your grazing lands, inform the DRR or Grazing Land Management committees in your village or ward. Convene a community meeting and come up with an action plan about what is to be done, when, and the resources required.

Divide the grazing land into smaller units and remove the weed unit by unit as groups.

Make sure you remove the weed before it flowers.

If you cut the weed after it has flowered, the *Lantana camara* berries have seeds which will germinate and spread through birds and other animals.

2. First remove the top part of the weed by chopping. Chop down the branches and lay them aside.

Place the cut branches and roots in heaps.

3. Remove the remaining stump by digging it out along with its roots using a hoe or pick axe.

Plant indigenous species of trees and shrubs in the holes you have dug.

Refill the holes placing the underground soil first and then the top soil.

Water until the plants are well developed

4. Place the stumps on the heaps you have made. Make sure the heaps are well spaced apart.

This is meant as a safety precaution for burning later on.

5. **Leave in the sun to dry completely.**

6. When satisfied that the piles of branches are dry, set them alight and burn completely.

Be safe. Fire can be a hazard and a risk to both lives and property.

Put measures in place to contain the fire before you burn the heaps.

7. Seek advice from the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) on burning procedure and timing.

