Established stands of leucaena form dense thickets, hindering the movement of wildlife and excluding all other plants. These thickets can also decrease visibility along roadsides.

Leucaena has been planted for fodder in many tropical areas of the world, including Queensland where an introduced stomach bug prevents ruminant problems, but horses lose hair if too much is eaten. Leucaena is also used for shade, firewood and as a soil stabiliser. Unless it is heavily grazed or otherwise controlled, it is able to rapidly spread to adjacent areas.

Native to Central and South America, leucaena is also listed as a weed in New Guinea, Hawaii, western Polynesia and the United States. Leucaena has naturalised throughout many areas of the Australian mainland and on a number of off-shore islands. Leucaena has been seen to invade many disturbed sites and creek lines and may have suppressed the regeneration of native species. Leucaena is an invasive plant which can disrupt native flora communities and ecosystems.

Description

Leucaena is a shrub growing up to about 6m high. Leaves are about 25cm long and bipinnate, with dull, greyish-green leaflets. Flower heads are spherical and creamy yellow in colour on short stalks about 5cm long.

Flattened pods up to 15cm long occur in dense clusters, each pod containing around 20 flat glossy-brown seeds that scatter when ripe.

Management

Small individual plants may be manually removed, taking care to remove the roots. Controlled grazing before it grows out of cattle’s reach controls it. On larger specimens or infestations, this option will probably not be feasible.

If you would like further information on the control of weeds, look at the A–Z Listing of Weeds at Queensland Government Website.