Red head cotton bush

*Asclepias curassavica* (Non Restricted Invasive Weed)

Red head cotton bush is also commonly known as ‘Scarlet milkweed’ and ‘Butterfly weed’. It is a native of tropical America and is a common invader of disturbed sites including roadsides, creek banks and neglected pastures.

The nectar of the flower attracts the non-native Monarch butterfly.

Red head cotton bush is moderately toxic to livestock, however is generally unpalatable and usually not eaten.

Red head cotton bush is an invasive plant which can disrupt native flora communities and ecosystems.

**Description**

Red head cotton bush is an erect herb to about 1 metre in height. Leaves are opposite, narrow and dark green with a pointed tip.

The underside of the leaf is a paler green than the top of the leaf.

Both sides have scattered hairs. Stems secrete a milky sap if broken or damaged.

Flowers are star-like, with five bright red petals and a yellow central crown. They form in clusters and release numerous dark brown seeds with cotton-like tufts of hairs.

**Management**

The plant is generally an invader of disturbed lands – whether that be soil disturbance or overgrazing. So, prevention of soil disturbance and the maintenance of a strong and healthy pasture will prevent the weed from taking over.

Plants can be easily hand pulled and this is the preferred method of control. Dispose of all plant material at an appropriate waste management facility.

If you would like further information on weeds look at the A–Z Listing of Weeds at [Queensland Government Website](http://www.qld.gov.au/).