

What is moth plant?

Moth plant is a vigorous evergreen climbing vine with arrow-head shaped leaves, dark green on top and grey-green below. Stems are woody with milky sap.

The flowers grow in creamy white to pink clusters, present from December to May. They are followed in autumn-winter by large, light green oval pods. The seedlings are shade tolerant and establish easily.



Why is it a problem?

Moth plant can become dominant in many situations and out-competes and replace native plants. It smothers and strangles whatever it climbs on.

The seeds are poisonous, and the milky-white sap is very sticky, and insects can become trapped. The sap is a skin irritant and can cause dermatitis.



Moth plant and the Regional Pest Management Plan

In the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP), moth plant is included in the following categories:

- **Hauraki Gulf Controlled Area pest (Site-led)**
All occupiers of land on Waiheke or Rākino island must destroy all moth plant on that land.
- **Aotea (Eradication)**
Auckland Council will destroy moth plant anywhere on the island. If you see moth plant on Aotea please report it via pestfree@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
- **Parkland with Significant Ecological Areas (Site-led)**
All occupiers of any land that is located within the buffer area (as defined in Map 6) of a park which is managed for moth plant, must destroy all moth plant on their land.
- **Whole region (Sustained Control)**
No person shall breed, distribute, release, sell or offer for sale, exhibit or plant/allow to be planted any moth plant within the Auckland region.



Phone 09 301 0101 or visit aucklandcouncil.govt.nz



Moth plant

Identification and control



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Where is moth plant found?

It is found mainly in forest margins and gaps, hedges, wasteland, road sides and coastal areas. It tolerates shady areas especially well.

It is also in many gardens around Auckland, both urban and rural.



How does it spread?

Moth plant pods contain up to 1000 seeds each. When dry, the pods split and wind can carry the seeds more than 20km away. The seeds will survive in and can be spread via water, and they can stick to clothing and animal fur.

Pods on dead vines will still open and spread their seeds.



How can I identify it?

Moth plant has some distinctive features.

The leaves are shaped like arrow-heads, and the flowers are like stars (5 petals).



It has light green, choko-like, oval pods, that can be up to 15cm long.



When mature, its vines become woody.



How do I control it?

Physical control

Dig or pull out. Seed pods will require disposal. Disposal options are to remove to greenwaste or landfill. DO NOT compost at home.



Community agrichemical control recommendations

- *If you have no qualifications:*
Cut stump and paste freshly cut base of stems with metsulfuron gel.



- *If you are Basic Growsafe certified:*
Cut stump and spray freshly cut base of stems with 1g metsulfuron-methyl per 1 L of water
- *If you are a Certified Handler or experienced:*
agrichemical user
Foliar spray with 5g metsulfuron-methyl per 10L of water and 20ml penetrant.
- Cut and pull vines away from desirable trees and native plants before foliar spraying.
- Follow up treated areas 3 times per year.

Encourage natural regeneration of native plants or replant treated areas where possible after 2-3 treatments to establish dense ground cover and minimise reinvasion.