

Moth Plant, Moth Vine, Kapok Vine, Cruel Plant

Araujia sericifera syn. *A. hortorum*, Apocynaceae



- vigorous long lived climber
- smothers and kills native plants
- grows to 6 m
- shade tolerant
- dark green leaves shaped like an arrowhead, greyish green on the underside and arranged in opposite pairs
- leaves can become thickened, more oblong and develop wavy margins when growing in direct sun
- produces clusters of 5 petalled, pink to white, bell-shaped flowers
- large pale green fruit each contain 250-1000 black seeds with long, fine hairs for wind dispersal
- seed remains viable for at least five years
- broken stems and fruit exude a caustic white sticky sap, which smells unpleasant
- traps bees, wasps, moths and butterflies, which are attracted to the fragrant flowers
- short tap root plus weak rhizomatous roots.
- introduced to New Zealand in the 1880s
- native to Paraguay, Uruguay, north east Argentina and southern Brazil



Photos: top and left, A. Stanton; above, W. John.

Control: Stems should be cut near the ground with the upper part of the vine left to die on its host. Avoid skin contact with the caustic milky white sap. The roots should be dug out or the cut stems should be painted with herbicide. Any fruit should be cut off and buried deeply or carefully disposed of at a landfill. Vigilant monitoring for new seedlings or missed plants needs to be undertaken each spring and early summer before fruit is set. Moth plant tolerates shade, so ongoing monitoring of even well established native plantings is required.