

Blue heliotrop

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Heliotropium amplexicaule

Distribution

Blue heliotrope is native to South America, and was probably introduced to Australia as an ornamental plant in the latter part of the 19th century. It is found in south-eastern Queensland and NSW. It is not a major pest of cane fields but does adapt to a wide range of habitats, and can reproduce from both seed and root fragments that occur throughout the soil profile.

Description

Blue top, as it is commonly known in the industry, is a perennial with a deep taproot, numerous lateral roots and a dense crown of weak stems forming rather flat clumps. Leaves are alternate, soft, 4-5 cm long and sparsely covered with long greyish hairs. Flowers are about 3 mm across, lilac or purple coloured with tiny yellow centres.

They are closely packed in rows along one side of the spike which is rolled back from the tip. The spikes are often in pairs at the ends of the branches.

Flowering usually starts in November and continues through summer until March, and is usually dependent on rainfall. However, it is capable of growing and flowering at any time of the year after rain in frost-free areas.

Management

For post-emergent control 2,4-D amine is recommended; atrazine provides pre-emergent control.

