

MILKWEED

EUPHORBIA HETEROPHYLLA

INTRODUCTION

Milkweed, also called Wild Poinsettia, is a short lived annual broadleaf. It is listed as an environmental weed in Queensland and considered a major weed of crops in coastal central Queensland.

DESCRIPTION

Milkweed is an upright herbaceous plant growing 20 to 80 cm tall, occasionally reaching 2 m. Latex is present in all parts of the plant. Milkweed reproduces by seed that spread by water or in mud attached to vehicles or animals.

Painted spurge (*Euphorbia cyathophora*) is a similar species more common in Southern Queensland and Northern New South Wales that can be distinguished by the bright red or orange cluster of leaves beneath its flowers.



Treatments efficacy 4 weeks after spraying.

DISTRIBUTION

Native to tropical America, milkweed is widely naturalised in coastal Queensland and other northern regions of Australia. It is found in crops, roadsides and other disturbed areas.

CHEMICAL CONTROL

Fluroxypyr, paraquat, dicamba are registered for the post-emergent control of milkweed in sugarcane, but growers are reporting poor control. Pendimethalin, imazapic, flumioxazin, amicarbazone, diuron and hexazinone are registered for the pre-emergent control of milkweed in sugarcane.

A replicated pot trial conducted by SRA showed that a range of post-emergent herbicides effectively control milkweed plants that were sprayed at an advanced growth stage (39 cm tall, before flowering). Spacing between pots at spraying ensured that an optimum spray coverage was achieved using 2 nozzles spaced 50 cm and spraying 40 cm above the plant canopy (*Table 1*).

In the field, high plant density may result in suboptimum spray coverage due to overlapping of leaves from several plants. Poor efficacy observed in the field could be due to poor spray coverage or poor product penetration in the leaves. Nozzle technology that improves product penetration in the canopy is likely to improve control. As milkweed leaf surface is water repellent, the use of an appropriate adjuvant to improve herbicide adhesion and penetration is important.

Always refer to product labels to understand their conditions of use, restrictions related to buffer zones and to prevent crop damage.

Table 1. Efficacy of treatments sprayed on 39 cm tall milkweed in the replicated pot trial carried out by SRA

ACTIVE INGREDIENT	COMMERCIAL NAME & RATE	ADJUVANT & RATE	EFFICACY*
2,4-D	1.6 L/ha Amicide® 700	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
2,4-D	2.2 L/ha Dropzone®	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
2,4-D + fluroxypyr	0.715 L/ha Amicide® 700 + 0.65 L/ha Apparent Fireball 400	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
2,4-D + fluroxypyr	1 L/ha Dropzone® + 0.65 L/ha Apparent Fireball	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
fluroxypyr	0.65 L/ha Apparent Fireball	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
MCPA + fluroxypyr	1 L/ha Adama MCPA 750 + 0.65 L/ha Apparent Fireball	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
dicamba + fluroxypyr	0.56 L/ha Apparent Dicamba + 0.65 L/ha Apparent Fireball	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
picloram + 2,4-D	0.47 L/ha Picoflex® + 1 L/ha Dropzone®	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
picloram + 2,4-D + fluroxypyr	0.47 L/ha Picoflex® + 1 L/ha Dropzone® + 0.65 L/ha Apparent Fireball	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
picloram + dicamba	0.47 L/ha Picoflex® + 0.56 L/ha Apparent Dicamba	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
picloram + MCPA	0.47 L/ha Picoflex® + 1 L/ha Adama MCPA	0.5 L/100L Cando®	100%
fluroxypyr + atrazine	0.65 L/ha Apparent Fireball + 0.9 kg/ha Gesaprim®	0.5 L/100L Cando®	97%
MCPA	1.45 L/ha Adama MCPA 750	0.5 L/100L Cando®	96%
dicamba + atrazine	0.56 L/ha Apparent Dicamba + 0.9 kg/ha Gesaprim®	0.5 L/100L Cando®	88%
dicamba	0.56 L/ha Apparent Dicamba 500	0.5 L/100L Cando®	79%

*Efficacy expressed in biomass reduction compared to untreated control



Plant stage at spraying in the SRA pot trial.

MECHANICAL CONTROL

As this plant is annual, preventing seed production is crucial. Mechanical control such as tillage or roguing before seed set can be effective.

FARM HYGIENE

If moving from areas where milkweed occurs to those weed-free, wash down farm vehicles and machinery to remove any soil.

REFERENCES

https://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/data/03080008-0301-4c05-8c0e-0c0f040b0803/media/Html/euphorbia_heterophylla.htm

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/discover-nature-at-jcu/plants/nq-weeds-by-scientific-name2/euphorbia-heterophylla>

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