

Environmental Weed Alert.



Duranta

Duranta repens, Duranta erecta, Duranta plumeri

Description: This will come as a shock to many keen gardeners but Duranta, also known as Sky Flower, Pigeon Berry, Golden Dewdrop or Geisha Girl is an invasive environmental weed listed on the Bushland Friendly Nursery Scheme weed list. It is unfortunately a very commonly used plant in many urban yards. Many of the hedges throughout the area commonly consist of this weed promoted through the nursery trade and gardening books and as hedges, copied to be just like the neighbours. To the detriment of our native bushland, the originality of a distinctive hedge has deteriorated within society. Ballina Council has also played a part in these plantings and due to its environmental responsibility has ceased to plant anymore and is currently removing Duranta from the Council's public amenity plantings. Duranta is a fast growing shrub or small tree, growing to 4-5m tall, is native to Central and South America and unfortunately thrives in our sub tropical coastal environment. It has drooping, and occasionally spiny branches with oval leaves (sometimes toothed) in pairs or threes. The leaves are glossy yellow to green. In spring to autumn it produces blue to pale purple, trumpet shaped flowers in clusters, followed by large clusters of orangey/yellow-rounded fruits about 1cm in diameter. The fruits are poisonous to humans so they are not practical hedges near children. Duranta is extremely invasive due to the quantity of fruits it can produce and its suckering capabilities in our local climate. Duranta continues to be spread by humans and birds threatening our native vegetation communities and will cost large resources to suppress this weed. Our native birds would much prefer a diverse hedge of native species containing indigenous fruits. Some attractive native alternatives to this weed include the Beach Alectryon (*Alectryon coriacus*), Midgenberry (*Austromyrtus dulcis*), Brush Cherry (*Syzygium australe*), Blue Lilly Pilly (*Syzygium oleosum*) and various other Lilly Pilly hybrids.

Control: As a well maintained hedge, the fruits may never get the chance to form but leaving the hedge for more than 2 months will give it an opportunity to form fruit and spread. This is one very high maintenance weed. Small shrubs can be chopped back and the root balls pulled out but removing larger shrubs and small trees will require removing and bagging all fruit, chopping near the base and using a registered herbicide to poison the stump and root ball. Well worth the work to provide an alternative hedge that attracts our native birds, supports their correct diet and is environmentally responsible.