



Invasive Weeds of the Santa Ana Watershed



Photo Credit CDFA

Bladder Flower (*Araujia sericifera*)

The bladder flower is also called the moth plant, moth catcher, or white bladder flower. Bladder flower is an escaped ornamental in the same family as the milkweeds (Asclepiadaceae). It is a fast growing perennial vine, adding 20-30 ft (6-9 m) in one season, with milky sap, opposite leaves, twining stems, and fruits that are 10-12 cm in length. It has a white bell or funnel shaped corolla, 2-3 cm in length. It flowers most abundantly in the summer and has sticky pollen that traps insects such as moths. Bladder flower is native to South American, particularly Brazil and Peru.

Habitat

Bladder flower is found in citrus groves, orchards, landscaped areas and disturbed places to an elevation of 400 m (1300 ft.). It also found in poor, wet, or dry soils and can tolerate light to moderate frosts. Bladder flower clammers over adjacent vegetation and so can form large patches and colonies, often smothering the support shrub or tree.

Status and Distribution

Although bladder flower is found throughout California, it is considered uncommon. It is found mainly in the North Coast Ranges of Mendocino and Sonoma Counties, the San Francisco Bay region, Central Valley in Sacramento and Fresno Counties, and the South Coast Ranges and region in Ventura, SW San Bernardino, NW Riverside, and NE Orange Counties. Locally, bladder flower has been found in the north and south basins of Prado Basin, Huntington Central Park, Green River Golf Course, Chino Creek adjacent to Prado Regional Park, and on Mount Rubidoux.

Relevant Life History

Bladder flower produces large numbers of seeds with a seed viability of approximately 90%. However, freezing temperatures severely lowers seed viability. Bladder flower has not been described as rhizomatous, but severed pieces of underground stems or crowns can produce new roots and shoots. Seeds are produced during its first growing season and are dispersed by wind and water.

How to Control Bladder Flower

Hawaiian Ecosystems at Risk (HEAR, see link below) recommends digging out or cutting base of plant and paint with stump herbicide mix. Ripe and immature fruits should be collected, removed, and destroyed. CDFA found that tilling effectively controls seedlings but may spread bladder flower to other areas. Glyphosate® (2%) has been used to treat re-sprouts of other milkweeds effectively; this is most effective during the bud to early flowering stage. Re-treatment may be necessary for full eradication. The white sap contacted during treatment can be irritating to the skin.

Who to contact

Call Susan Hoffman of SAWA with any additional sightings or questions at 951-538-0284.

References

Hickman, J. C. 1993. The Jepson manual: higher plants of California. U. Cal. Press, Berkeley. p. 171

<http://www.hear.org/pier/arser.htm>

<http://pi.cdfa.ca.gov/weedinfo/usedimages/araujiemap.html>