**MICONIA – ERADICATING THE ‘PURPLE PLAGUE’**

 **An inside look at 20 years of locating and removing this colourful threat**

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**SUMMARY**

Four species of *Miconia* (*M. calvescens, M. racemosa, M. nervosa and M. cionotricha*)are regulated as Prohibited Matter under the NSW *Biosecurity Act 2015*. All pose a significant threat to our rainforests and are targeted for eradication. Capable of rampant growth and high seed yield, this invader can form dense thickets capable of outcompeting native understorey plants, affecting wildlife populations and increasing the risk of erosion and landslides on steep slopes.

*Miconia calvescens* was first detected in NSW in 1982 growing in the Sydney Botanical Gardens. Since then an additional 13 infested premises (IP’s) have been identified on the Far North Coast of NSW. In 2003 extensive detection and eradication programs were put in place following the inclusion of the species in the National Tropical Weeds Eradication Program (NTWEP) cost share agreement which is managed by QLD Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QLD DAF).

This paper will provide a brief history of *M. calvescens* detection in NSW before detailing the NSW Government and local government programs that are successfully being implemented on the Far North Coast of NSW.

Identifying and removing incursions of Miconia have been an ongoing battle on the Far North Coast for the past twenty years. This attractive garden addition has been a plant collectors’ favourite, inspiring budding botanists and passionate gardeners to share germinated seedlings within their local community. Nurseries within the region also found the species easy to grow and sell amongst other exotic rainforest varieties. For the past twenty years these individual trees have been slowly but successfully identified and controlled by weed officers with Rous County Council. The importance of extension and engagement with the local community has been highlighted throughout this program in addition to hundreds of kilometres of on-ground surveillance for the seedlings that continue to emerge.

**Keywords:** surveillance; rapid response; awareness raising; ornamental