

MOTH VINE ON THE MARCH



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PHOTO: Moth vine, showing flowers and pods.

QUICK TAKE

- Moth vine is spreading rapidly across the Riverina, posing a growing threat to orchards, vineyards and mixed farming systems.
- Once a garden escapee, moth vine now smothers crops, spreads widely by seed and is difficult to eradicate.
- Infestations reduce yields, damage canopy health, and increase labour, compliance and workplace safety costs for growers.
- Early detection and coordinated management between neighbours, councils and agencies are critical to slowing moth vine spread.

Farmers and horticultural advisers across the Riverina are sounding the alarm as *Araujia sericifera* – moth vine – continues to spread rapidly across orchards, vineyards and mixed farming systems.

ONCE a minor garden escapee, moth vine has become a costly threat to horticultural production, prompting calls for coordinated regional action. For nearly 2 decades in Leeton, and in recent seasons around Griffith, landholders have seen a sharp rise in infestations along fencelines, irrigation channels, remnant vegetation and, most particularly, in neglected blocks.

The vine's vigorous climbing habit allows it to smother citrus trees and grapevines. Its dense canopy competes for light and nutrients, and its creeping root system makes eradication difficult. Moth vine can take hold quickly and if left unmanaged, it becomes a serious headache. Its seed pods spread far more widely than many people expect.

A risk to horticultural productivity

Across the MIA's major horticultural crops – citrus, grapes, almonds, olives, vegetables and stone fruit – moth vine impacts growers by choking developing branches and damaging canopy health, lowering yields, and increasing labour and WHS costs. The weed is also spreading rapidly. Grower groups have raised concerns that under-maintained land is contributing to new outbreaks across commercial orchards.

Control requires a coordinated approach

Industry stresses the need for vigilance and cooperation between growers, councils, irrigation corporations and state landholders. Unfortunately, like many introduced pests, moth vine requires continual adaptation of farming practices to remain viable.

Recommended strategies include:

- Early detection: remove young plants before pods form.
- Manual removal: cut vines at the base, bag pods securely (avoid burning), and paint stems with approved herbicides.
- Herbicide programs: spot-spray actively growing plants during warmer months.
- Fenceline and roadside management: treat shared boundaries consistently.
- Regular monitoring: especially after irrigation, storms and along water channels.

The Griffith and District Citrus Growers Association continues to advocate for stronger weed-management obligations, noting that compliance must improve on private land before government enforcement is viable. The “my neighbour isn't doing it, so why should I?” mentality remains a real obstacle.

On-farm control: practical advice

Growers often ask how best to manage moth vine. Unfortunately, there is no simple fix – it takes adaptation and persistence. A key recommendation is maintaining a visible gap between soil and foliage, particularly in citrus. This prevents vines from quickly climbing into the canopy and improves herbicide penetration.



MOTH VINE CONTROL TIPS

Early intervention is key to weed control success long term.

Registered and effective chemical control options for moth vine are extremely limited for safe usage around orchards. Therefore, the importance of cultural control methods cannot be downplayed, such as tree skirting and diligent monitoring of orchards.

Growers are urged to seek advice from trusted professionals.

There are plenty of resources online and provided by government agencies for the control of moth vine however people need to be aware that many of these are not suitable in all situations, with some of the listed control options online likely to cause economic damage to orchards if applied.

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One grower reported 3 isolated infestations likely introduced via harvest crews. The grower has mapped the locations, sets monthly reminders, and targets them with a handheld sprayer while scouting the rest of the block.

Where moth vine is spreading from neighbouring land, growers are encouraged to start a conversation. Some landholders are overwhelmed; others may be unaware of their obligations under the NSW Biosecurity Act.

Local council and NSW DPIRD officers can help develop management plans and offer guidance. Producers who discover new moth vine outbreaks should notify their local council, Local Land Services or grower association. Early reporting helps identify emerging hotspots and strengthens coordinated control efforts.

A weed that won't go away without action

The message from industry is clear: don't ignore moth vine.

Its resilience and ability to smother high-value crops make it one of the Riverina's most troublesome emerging weeds. With sustained attention and shared responsibility, growers can prevent it from becoming entrenched across the region. 🌤️

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