



1. Creeping stems and very broad lower leaves. 2. Yellow flowers with reddish markings. 3. Close-up of segmented fruit with bristles. 4. Infestation in a lawn.



## Zornia (*Zornia latifolia*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Zornia is a long-lived creeping plant that grows in lawns, in parks, along footpaths and on roadsides. It is native to tropical America and is sometimes cultivated as a pasture plant or grown for its hallucinogenic properties.

### Distribution

This plant was detected growing in mown areas at Paradise Point, on the Gold Coast, about five years ago. It has since been recorded from other parts of the Gold Coast, including Runaway Bay, Helensvale and Bilinga, and seems to be spreading rapidly. There is also evidence that it may have been naturalised in coastal northern Queensland for much longer, including a specimen collected from the Tully district in 1979.

### Description

Zornia is a low-growing plant with a woody taproot and short-lived creeping stems 20-50 cm long. It usually dies back to the rootstock during winter, producing new stems and leaves in spring and summer, and flowers and fruit in autumn. Each of the alternately arranged leaves has two leaflets, which are 1-4 cm long. The leaves at the base of the stems are quite broad and become progressively narrower along the branches.

The small flowers are produced in elongated clusters at the tips of the branches, with up to 35 flowers per cluster. There is a small green leafy structure (up to 15 mm long) at the base of each of the pea-shaped flowers. These yellow flowers (up to 10 mm long) are usually marked with reddish lines. The fruit are small jointed pods that are made up of 2-8 segments. Each of the rounded segments (2-3 mm long) is covered with numerous tiny bristles and contains a single seed.

### Quick Facts

- > Low-growing plant with a woody taproot and short-lived creeping stems.
- > Leaves have two leaflets and are quite broad on young stems.
- > Small yellow flowers with reddish markings in autumn.
- > Small segmented pods covered with tiny bristles.

### Habitat

Zornia is usually seen growing along footpaths, in lawns, in parks and in other mown areas in coastal districts. It has also been recorded growing in disturbed sites, along roadsides and in gardens. In its native habitat in America, Zornia grows in open woodlands and grasslands.





1. Habit in flower in autumn. 2. Exposed woody rootstock.

## Reproduction and Dispersal

This species only reproduces by seed. As it often grows in lawns and other mown areas, it is most probably dispersed as a result of mowing activities (for example, in clippings or on contaminated equipment). Its bristly seed-pods may also become attached to animals, vehicles, shoes and clothing.

## Why is it an Emerging Threat?

Zornia has quickly become a troublesome weed of lawns and other mown areas on the Gold Coast. Based on its native distribution in America, it is likely to continue to spread and become established throughout the tropical and sub-tropical parts of northern and eastern Australia. It has also become a weed in tropical western Africa, where it occurs in gardens and lawns, on roadsides and airfields, and in savannas.

## Control Methods

Individual specimens can be removed manually although it is advisable in hard, dry soil conditions to loosen the soil first before applying any force. Ensure all of the root system remains intact during removal. While working in infested areas that contain plants with seed pods present, check and remove any plant material that may have become attached to yourself or your equipment prior to leaving the area. If mowing has to be carried-out while fruits/seed pods are present, collect all clippings if possible and dispose of them in a sanitary manner.

While no chemicals are currently registered for the control of *Zornia latifolia*, research has shown that this species along with other *Zornia spp.* can easily be controlled using a range of herbicides. This information can be viewed at [http://www.tropicalforages.info/key/Forages/Media/Html/Zornia\\_latifolia.htm](http://www.tropicalforages.info/key/Forages/Media/Html/Zornia_latifolia.htm). Selective control can be obtained in lawns and grassed areas using a range of products including 2,4-D or Triclopyr as well as other broadleaf herbicides.

Within Queensland, the use of 2,4-D or Triclopyr formulations is permitted for the spot spraying of environmental weeds such as *Zornia latifolia* in non-crop situations via off-label permit 11463 (<http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PERI11463.PDF>). Before applying this method of control within other state boundaries, it is recommended that all operators consult any relevant permits or government legislation.

*The control methods referred to in Weed Watch™ should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the utilisation of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, Technigro does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.*

*This information has been developed with the assistance of Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Navie. © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2010*

## Look a-likes

Zornia is very similar to several closely related native species including *Zornia dyctiophylla*, which is occasionally a weed of lawns and other mown areas. However, *Zornia dyctiophylla* has narrower leaves and its flowers are widely spaced along the stems. Its fruit also lack obvious bristles, though they may have some small bristly hairs.



Top. Habit with narrower leaves.

Bottom. Fruit lacking any obvious bristles.

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