



1. Leaves, flowers and pods of Coiled indigo. 2. Infestation along a footpath at Helensvale on the Gold Coast 3. Habit growing in a lawn 4. Close up of flower and leaves



## Coiled indigo (*Indigofera circinella*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Coiled indigo is a long-lived creeping plant that grows in lawns, parks and disturbed sites, such as footpaths and roadsides. It is native to tropical eastern Africa and was introduced into Australia in the 1970s for testing in pasture trials.

### Distribution

This plant was deliberately cultivated in pasture trials at Beerwah on the Sunshine Coast in the 1970s. It was first recorded as naturalised in 1984, when it was collected from footpaths in the inner Brisbane suburb of Coorparoo. It was reported in other parts of suburban Brisbane in the 1990s (e.g. Chapel Hill), but until recently its distribution was thought to be quite localised. However, in the last couple of years it has been spotted growing in several other Brisbane suburbs (e.g. Stafford, Toombul, Newmarket and St. Lucia), in the Caboolture area, and on various parts of the Gold Coast (i.e. in the Helensvale, Mudgeeraba and Bundall areas).

### Description

A small, low-growing, plant with a long-lived rootstock and creeping stems up to 50 cm long. Its alternately arranged leaves usually have six leaflets (occasionally 4-8) and are borne on very short stalks 0.5-1 mm long. The small leaflets (3-12 mm long and 1.5-3.5 mm wide) have hairless upper surfaces and sparsely hairy undersides. Their margins are entire and their tips are rounded or end in a very short point.

The flowers are borne in small clusters (4-10 mm long) that are hidden amongst the leaves. Each cluster contains several small pink to reddish flowers (about 5 mm long and 3 mm wide). The fruit are small cylindrical pods that are initially green, but as they mature they turn brown and become spirally coiled. These pods (15-25 mm long and 1.5-2 mm wide) are sparsely covered in close-lying hairs and contain 6-14 small seeds.

### Quick Facts

- > Creeping plant with woody taproot and spreading stems
- > Leaves usually with six small leaflets
- > Small pink or reddish flowers in leaf forks
- > Slender pods that become coiled as they mature

### Habitat

Coiled indigo is usually seen growing along footpaths, in lawns, in parks and in other mown areas. It has also been recorded growing in disturbed sites, along roadsides and in gardens.





1. Growing on a creekbank in Toombul. 2. Close up of coiled pods.

## Reproduction and Dispersal

This species only reproduces by seed. Because it often grows in lawns and other mown areas, it is most probably dispersed as a result of mowing activities (i.e. in clippings or on contaminated equipment).

## Why is it an Emerging Threat?

Coiled indigo has the potential to become a troublesome weed of lawns and other mown areas – in the same way that Creeping indigo already has. Based on its native distribution in Africa, it is likely to continue to spread and become established throughout the tropical and sub-tropical parts of northern and eastern Australia.

## Control Methods

Individual specimens can be removed manually, although it is often advisable to loosen the soil around the main taproot prior to applying any force. When operating mowing equipment, clean or blow down prior to leaving the infested area. If clippings are being collected, these should be bagged or contained and then disposed of in a sanitary manner.

While no chemicals are currently registered for the control of Coiled indigo, documentation shows that other species belonging to this genus are known to be susceptible to formulations containing a mixture of Dicamba and MCPA. This information can be viewed at [www.tropicalforages.info/key/Forages/Media/Html/Indigofera\\_spicata.htm](http://www.tropicalforages.info/key/Forages/Media/Html/Indigofera_spicata.htm). Improved results from chemical control are likely to be obtained if treatment occurs prior to plants reaching a mature size.

Within Queensland, the use of Dicamba and MCPA formulations is permitted for the spot spraying of environmental weeds such as Coiled indigo in non-crop situations via off-label permit 11463 (<http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER11463.PDF>). Before applying this method of control within other state boundaries, it is recommended that all operators consult any relevant permits or government legislation.

## Look a-likes

Coiled indigo is very similar to Creeping indigo (*Indigofera spicata*), another much more common and widespread weed of mown areas in eastern Australia. However, the pods of Creeping indigo are straight and its pink to orange flowers are borne in much larger clusters (3-8 cm long).



Top. Straight pods.

Bottom. Larger clusters with numerous flowers.

*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*

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