



1. Infestation along rainforest margin at Tallebudgera on the Gold Coast. 2. Seedling. 3. Immature and mature fruit. 4. Glossy and leathery leaves with crenate margins.



## Coral ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Coral Ardisia is a member of the Myrsinaceae or Primulaceae plant family from eastern Asia. It is commonly cultivated in Australia and is an emerging weed in rainforests and riparian vegetation.

### Distribution

This species has been naturalised in Australia for some time, but its frequency and impact has increased significantly in recent years. It was first recorded becoming naturalised in the understorey of a Hoop Pine plantation in northern Queensland in 1974, and was then reported from the Sunshine Coast in 1977. There were several subsequent records of this species throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including populations reported from northern and central NSW. However, the vast majority of sightings of this species have occurred since the year 2000.

The majority of records now come from tropical rainforest areas in northern Queensland, and coastal sites in south-eastern Queensland and northern NSW. In many sites plants are still relatively sparse and scattered, however in some areas (e.g. at Tallebudgera Creek on the Gold Coast) they are becoming dominant in the rainforest understorey.

### Description

A small shrub usually about 1 m tall, but occasionally reaching up to 2 m in height. Its stems and leaves are generally hairless. The elongated leaves (5-15 cm long and 1-4 cm wide) are alternately arranged along the stems and borne on short stalks about 3-10 mm long. These leaves are relatively thick and leathery with glossy dark green upper surfaces and paler undersides. They have pointed tips and toothed or wavy margins.

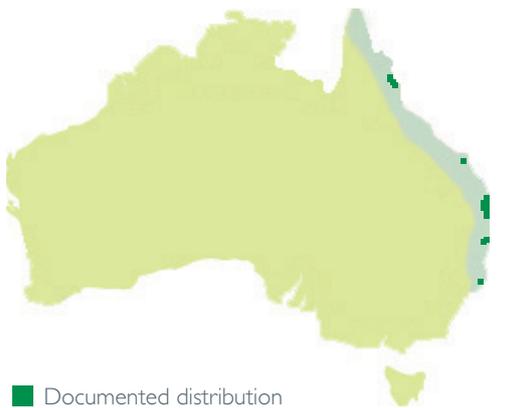
The white to pink flowers are fragrant and borne in clusters on separate flowering branches. These flowering branches are 4-16 cm long and usually divide into several smaller branches (i.e. the clusters are compound). The individual flowers (4-6 mm across) are borne on stalks 5-10 mm long. These flowers usually have five small sepals (1-2.5 mm long), five white or pink petals (about 4 mm long), and five stamens. The petals have pointed tips and, under close inspection, numerous tiny black spots can be seen on them when they are young. The fruit are rounded 'berries' (5-8 mm across) that are glossy in appearance. They are initially green in colour but turn bright to dark red as they mature, and can remain on the plant for several months.

### Quick Facts

- > A small shrub growing up to 2m tall
- > Alternately arranged leaves with toothed margins
- > White or pinkish flowers covered in numerous minute black spots
- > Clusters of shiny bright red berries

### Habitat

This species prefers fertile, well-drained, soils in partially shaded positions. It is most commonly found in the understorey of rainforests and dense riparian vegetation along waterways.



■ Documented distribution  
■ Potential distribution



1. Habit in fruit. 2. Flowers.

## Reproduction and Dispersal

Coral Ardisia reproduces mainly by seed. The seeds are most commonly dispersed by birds and other animals, which excrete the seed after consuming the attractive fruit. They may also be spread in dumped garden waste and by water movement during floods.

## Why is it an Emerging Threat?

Coral Ardisia is an emerging weed of tropical, sub-tropical and warmer temperate regions in Australia. It is beginning to invade the understorey of tropical rainforests in northern Queensland and sub-tropical rainforests in south-eastern Queensland and north-eastern NSW. It is also established in densely forested riparian zones around Brisbane (e.g. along Enoggera Creek and Bulimba Creek). It is particularly troublesome in rainforests and other closed forests, largely because its seeds will germinate in low light conditions under a dense forest canopy. Mature plants are usually surrounded by a carpet of seedlings, which displace small native groundcover species.

In Florida, in the USA, Coral Ardisia is already a serious weed issue. It dominates the forest understorey in some conservation reserves, and may reach densities of greater than 100 plants per square metre. Studies have shown that the native plant diversity in these areas is substantially reduced by the presence of this weed. It can also reduce the light levels reaching the forest floor by up to 70%, shading out seedlings and potentially preventing the regeneration of native plants.

## Control Methods

Seedlings and younger plants can be easily removed by hand, while larger shrubs may require treatment with herbicide. Fruit should be bagged and disposed of properly so it is not dispersed by birds. Plants that break off, and even small root fragments left in the ground, may reshoot. Therefore, repeated hand-pulling or follow-up with herbicide applications is often necessary. Research in the US has suggested that low-volume foliar applications of products containing Triclopyr or Imazapic are effective, along with basal bark applications of Triclopyr. Adjuvants are usually necessary to help the chemical to stick to, and be absorbed into, the glossy leaves.

No herbicides are specifically registered for the control of Coral Ardisia in Australia, but Vigilant Gel is registered for the control of woody weeds in Australia. Woody environmental weeds may also be controlled in Queensland with some herbicides as outlined in APVMA off-label Permit 11463 (see <http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER11463.PDF>). For example, some formulations of glyphosate and triclopyr can be applied as foliar, cut stump or basal bark applications. However there are limitations as to which of these chemicals can be used near waterways. Please read the off-label permit carefully for the exact products and rates to use and, unless otherwise stated in the permit, the use of any of these herbicides must be in accordance with the instructions on their labels. Within other state boundaries, it is recommended that any relevant permits or government legislation applicable to the region be consulted.

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 IVM Group and Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2014

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## Look a-likes

Coral berry (*Ardisia crenata*) is relatively similar to Shoebuttton Ardisia (*Ardisia elliptica*). However, Shoebuttton Ardisia has leaves with entire margins and its fruit turn black or purplish-black when fully mature. There are also several native Ardisia species present in the rainforests of northern Australia, but these generally have leaves with entire margins.



Top. Shoebuttton Ardisia flowers and leaves.

Bottom. Pink immature fruit and black mature fruit.