



1. Habit climbing over young eucalypts. 2. Pink flowers with reddish markings. 3. Immature fruit pod. 4. Close-up of leaves divided into two separate leaflets.



## Yunnan bauhinia (*Bauhinia yunnanensis*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Yunnan bauhinia is a woody vine or climber that is native to south-eastern Asia (i.e. southern China, Myanmar and northern Thailand). This plant is occasionally grown as a garden ornamental and is also known as Orchid vine or Butterfly vine. It is a member of the Caesalpiniaceae plant family and has recently become established in south-eastern Queensland.

### Distribution

Yunnan bauhinia has been recorded from a few locations in south-eastern Queensland in the last five years. The first record was from disturbed bushland along the Brisbane River in the suburb of St. Lucia in 2007. Plants had probably become established in this area from dumped garden waste, and were climbing about 8m up eucalypt trees. Shortly afterwards, in 2008, an infestation was recorded smothering young trees in another part of St. Lucia. Another infestation was also spotted growing over roadside vegetation in the Gold Coast hinterland in 2009. Yunnan bauhinia has also recently become naturalised in Miami-Dade County in southern Florida.

### Description

This scrambling or climbing plant usually grows about 4-5 m tall, but may occasionally reach up to 10 m in height. Its younger branches are green and almost hairless, while its older stems become somewhat woody. It usually loses some of its leaves in winter (i.e. it is semi-deciduous) and it bears small curved or coiled tendrils in pairs in its leaf forks. Like other bauhinias, its alternately arranged leaves have two leaflets and resemble a butterfly in appearance. The two leaflets are relatively small (2-5 cm long and 1-3 cm wide) and are attached to the leaf stalk part way up one side. They are mostly hairless, with broad bases and narrower tips that are both rounded.

The flowers are produced in summer and are arranged in clusters at the tips of the branches, or on small side-branches opposite the leaves. These clusters are 8-18 cm long and contain about 10-20 flowers. Each flower is borne on a stalk 2-3 cm long and has five pinkish petals with darker red markings. They also have three curved stamens and an ovary topped with a slender style. The elongated fruit pods are relatively large (8-15 cm long and 15-20 mm wide) and somewhat flattened. They contain several flattened blackish seeds about 7-9 mm across.

### Quick Facts

- > A woody climber with butterfly-shaped leaves
- > Can completely smother other vegetation during summer
- > Pinkish flowers with five petals that bear reddish markings
- > Large elongated fruit pods containing flattened seeds

### Habitat

In its native range, Yunnan bauhinia commonly grows in vine thickets on hillsides. In Australia, it has become established on roadsides and in disturbed vegetation in urban areas. It may have the potential to invade wetter forests and riparian vegetation in the sub-tropical and tropical regions of Australia.



■ Documented distribution  
■ Potential distribution



1. Infestation smothering a Chinese elm sapling. 2. Older woody stems.

## Reproduction and Dispersal

This species reproduces mainly by seed, but may also have the capacity to spread by layering. Its seeds are probably mainly spread in discarded garden waste. However, once established in natural areas, seeds may also be spread downstream during floods.

## Why is it an Emerging Threat?

This vine has the capacity to climb over and envelope shrubs and younger trees. Field observations indicate that it can totally smother riparian vegetation at certain times of the year, forming a dense canopy that impedes light penetration and prevents the growth and regeneration of understorey plants. However, because of its main dispersal methods, it is likely to spread relatively slowly.

## Control Methods

This plant can be controlled physically by cutting the aboveground stems, but it will probably re-grow from the base if its entire crown is not removed. Seedlings and small plants may be more easily hand-pulled.

Chemical control may be more feasible on larger plants that are difficult to remove by physical methods. Basal bark or cut stump applications of products containing fluroxypyr (e.g. Starane), glyphosate (e.g. Roundup) or triclopyr + picloram (e.g. Grazon DS, Access or Tordon Double Strength) may be effective. In Queensland, these herbicides can be used to control environmental weeds such as Yunnan bauhinia via the APVMA off-label permit number PER 11463 (<http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER11463.PDF>). Unless otherwise stated in this permit, the use of the product must be in accordance with instructions on its label. Within other state boundaries, it is recommended that all managers consult any relevant permits or government legislation applicable to their region.

## Look a-likes

This species may be easily confused with a closely related garden plant known as Climbing bauhinia (*Bauhinia corymbosa*). However, in Climbing bauhinia the leaves are deeply lobed rather than fully divided into two leaflets. Also, the younger parts of Climbing bauhinia are covered with reddish hairs.



**Top.** Habit of Climbing bauhinia.

**Bottom.** Close-up of leaves, which are not fully divided to the base.

*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 Sheldon Navie © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2012*

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Post: PO Box 2020, Nerang BC, QLD, 4210

T: 1800 678 611 [technigro.com.au](http://technigro.com.au)