

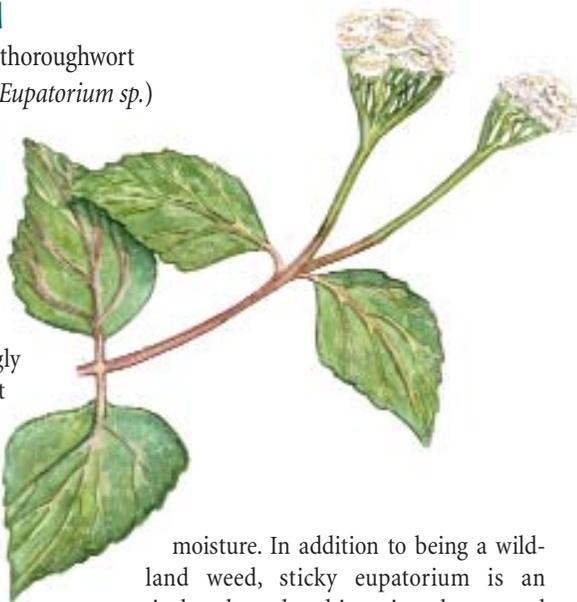
STICKY EUPATORIUM

Also known as Crofton weed, eupatory, thoroughwort
Ageratina adenophora (formerly *Eupatorium* sp.)
 Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)

DESCRIPTION

This perennial herb or semi-shrub is found on moist, exposed slopes and disturbed areas, particularly in riparian habitat and in forest clearings.

Sticky eupatorium often has a straggly appearance and typically grows 3–5 feet tall. The stems are long and dark red with downy hairs, and woody at the base. Sticky eupatorium grows rapidly, its shoots and branches forming dense thickets. Leaves are opposite and triangular-ovate with toothed margins. They are about 2 inches long, dark green, and glossy.



moisture. In addition to being a wild-land weed, sticky eupatorium is an agricultural weed and is toxic to horses and unpalatable to cattle.

REPRODUCTION

Sticky eupatorium spreads primarily by asexual seed production. Small, white or pinkish inflorescences resembling pincushions appear in terminal clusters in March. From April to mid-June each plant produces 7,000–10,000 tiny black seeds, although up to a third of these are not viable. Each seed is topped with fine hairs that aid in wind dispersal. The seeds are easily airborne or dispersed by water, but they can also stick to clothing, footwear, or passing vehicles and animals. Most germination takes place in August and September, and seedlings are capable of reproducing vegetatively within 8 weeks of germination. The plant can also reproduce from the roots and through parts of the stem that touch the ground.

IMPACTS

Sticky eupatorium crowds out native plants after fire disturbance or flooding, and is very competitive with natives in areas with summer

KEY FACTORS

- u Prolific seed production and rapid growth.
- u Seed viability thought to be 2–3 years.
- u Thrives in moist drainage areas.
- u Resprouts from roots and from stems in contact with soil.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- u **Pull** plants by hand or **dig** them out with a Pulaski when the plant is in flower but before it has gone to seed. Removing sticky eupatorium by hand is time-consuming. Although the root system is shallow, stems break easily, especially on drier soils, so care should be taken to pull from the base of the stems so as not to leave root fragments. In moist drainage areas, you might find yourself pulling up heavy, sodden clumps of root mass and soil. Often you'll find that the roots form a continuous mat. However, it's important to get the root mass, as the plant will otherwise resprout.

- u **Brush cut** sticky eupatorium on dry, steep slopes and in drainage areas, using a rotary slash brushcutter. Some practitioners then follow up by digging out the roots; others, by spraying the cut stems with herbicide. In the Marin Headlands repeated brushcutting at monthly intervals in the drier months has proved unsuccessful in exhausting the root system and preventing the stems from resprouting, perhaps because of the additional moisture supplied by summer coastal fog.
- u **Foliar spray.** Some practitioners have had success by spraying a weak solution of glyphosate in infestations on dry slopes away from water. Spray the tops and undersides of the leaves (either before or just after the plants begin to show buds).

DISPOSAL

Stems will easily reroot in water, so make brush piles well away from wet areas. Piles can be left to decompose on site.

FOLLOW-UP

If the infestation is a manageable size, follow brushcutting with removal of the roots. Alternatively, if it is safe to use herbicide, you can wait for lush growth to return after brushcutting and spray the plants in order to finally kill them. Return to the site 2–3 times after the initial visit (at 6-month intervals) to scrape off any new seedlings from the soil surface with a McLeod or hula hoe. Mulching the weeded area with a 1- to 2-inch-thick layer of straw or covering with landscape fabric will help prevent the seedbank from germinating and will make follow-up much easier.

INTERESTING FACTS

Originating in Mexico, sticky eupatorium is considered a major agricultural weed around the world. It may have been introduced to California as an ornamental plant. In India the plant is being used to produce a green commercial dye, while in Nepal the plant juice is applied to cuts and injuries. Studies show that composting sticky eupatorium for approximately 2 months eliminates its toxins.

Notes