



Moth plant

Report this pest



Why is it a pest?

Moth plant is bad for both biodiversity and human health.

It creeps over the ground and climbs up shrubs and trees, smothering and breaking native plants. When crushed, it releases a toxic milky sap, which causes skin and eye irritation and is poisonous to humans and some animals.

Moth plant can spread rapidly, with each fruit dispersing hundreds of seeds that can spread over long distances in the wind.

Moth plant has not been reported in Otago.

What does it look like?

- **Size:** Moth plant is an evergreen climbing vine that can grow over 6 metres tall.
- **Leaves:** It has broad, oblong-shaped leaves with a green upper surface and a grey downy underside.
- **Flowers:** It produces many small, bell-shaped white or pale pink flowers from November to May. The fruit is fist-sized, with leathery skin and a plump top where it attaches to the vine. Each fruit contains hundreds of seeds attached to silky threads.
- **Root system:** Short, thick taproot (main root) and weak shallow roots.
- **Similar species:** Looks similar to choko plant (*Sechium edule*) or tweedia (*Oxypetalum caeruleum*), but choko plant fruit has shiny skin and a plump base, and tweedia has heart-shaped leaves, slender fruit, and bright blue flowers. Both plants also lack the poisonous white sap.
- **Habitat:** Moth plant thrives in nearly any frost-free habitat.



Common name:

Moth plant

Scientific name:

Araujia hortorum

Management programme:

Exclusion

The exclusion programme aims to stop certain pests that are in very low numbers or in surrounding areas from establishing in Otago.



**Report
this pest!**

If you have seen or suspect the presence of this pest, you **must report** the sighting to us at **orc.govt.nz/reportpests**

When can I spot it?

Moth plant is easiest to spot during its flowering season from November to May.

Fruit may appear during autumn and winter and may remain on the plant even after it matures and splits open to release seeds.

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What are the rules?

To prevent the establishment of moth plant in Otago and its negative environmental and economic effects, it is in the exclusion programme of the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan (2019–2029).

Moth plant is declared an unwanted organism in the National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA). Any species declared a pest under the NPPA cannot be sold or be in a place where plants are being sold. Pest plants cannot be propagated, bred, multiplied, communicated, released, caused to be released, or otherwise spread.

What should I do?

Do not attempt to undertake control of moth plant yourself.
Report any sightings to Otago Regional Council.



For more information, visit orc.govt.nz/mothplant



Report this pest



Help us find moth plant

You must notify Otago Regional Council if you suspect the presence of this pest.

If you think you've seen it:



Note the location



Take a photo
(if possible)



Report this pest
at orc.govt.nz/reportpests

