



Pacific Pests, Pathogens & Weeds - Mini Fact Sheet Edition

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Koster's curse (448)

Relates to: **Weeds**



Photo 1. Mass of seedlings of Koster's curse, *Clidemia hirta*.



Photo 2. Leaves, Koster's curse, *Clidemia hirta*. Note, the distinctive veins patterns.



Photo 3. Flowers, Koster's curse, *Clidemia hirta*. Note, the five petals.



Photo 4. Flowers and developing fruits, Koster's curse, *Clidemia hirta*.



Photo 5. Flowers and fruits, Koster's curse, *Clidemia hirta*.



Photo 6. Flowers and fruits, Koster's curse, *Clidemia hirta*. Note, the claw-like stamens, and hairs on the fruits.



Photo 7. Fruits, Koster's curse, *Clidemia hirta*, showing hairs and bristles on fruits and leaf stalks.

Summary

- Widespread. Asia, East Africa, South and Southeast Asia, North, South and Central America, Caribbean, Oceania. In many Pacific islands.
- Important invasive perennial bush: high seed production, rapid growth, tolerance to many disturbed and undisturbed environments. A threat to Pacific islands, forming dense thickets, smothering plantations, pastures, native vegetation, including forests.
- Stems, up to 1m, round, hairy. Leaves, 5-18 cm long, dark green, paired along stems, five distinct veins and cross-veins, more hairy below, on short leaf stalk. Flowers, clusters in leaf forks and at branch tips, on short stalks, with five white or pink petals, and claw-like stamens. Fruits, round, purplish-black berries with about 100 brown seeds.
- Spread: seed by birds and floodwaters, vehicles, pigs, on clothing, trade in ornamentals.
- Biosecurity: high risk of introduction. In Australia, 'restricted invasive plant': *do not release into environment, give away or sell*. Among 100 of World's Worst Invasive Alien Species (IUCN, 2020). Available on internet.
- Biocontrol: Success with *Liothrips urichi* (Fiji); recently (Hawaii), *Lius peisodon*, for shaded areas; *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides* f.sp. *clidemiae*, for drier parts.
- Cultural control: pull-out seedling, dig out shrubs, cultivate land; control feral pigs; vehicle hygiene to remove seed.
- Chemical control: in Australia: glyphosate (and Fiji); metsulfuron-methyl; fluroxypyr.

Common Name

Koster's curse; it is also known as soapbush.

Scientific Name

Clidemia hirta. It was known previously as *Clidemia elegans*, *Melastoma elegans*. It is a member of the Melastomataceae.

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Information from *Clidemia hirta* (L.) D. Don (2016) Weeds of Australia. Biosecurity Queensland edition. Queensland Government. (https://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/data/media/html/clidemia_hirta.htm); and CABI (2019) *Clidemia hirta* (Koster's curse). Invasive Species Compendium. (<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/13934>); and *Clidemia hirta* (2019) Wikipedia. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clidemia_hirta); and Koster's curse (*Clidemia hirta*) (2018) NSW Weeds. Department of Primary Industries. (<https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Kosterscurse>); and *Clidemia hirta* (2013) Bugwood wiki. (https://wiki.bugwood.org/Clidemia_hirta); and from Waterhouse & DF, Norris KR (1987) *Biological Control Pacific Prospects*. Inkata Press, Melbourne. Photos 1-6 Forest & Kim Starr. Starr Environmental, Flickr.

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