

Goatweed (451)

Summary

- Widespread. Asia, Africa, North, South and Central America, Caribbean, Europe (restricted), Oceania. In most Pacific islands.
- Invasive annual of natural habitats: grasslands, forests, wetlands, banks of water courses, coastal dunes, as well as pastures, plantations, orchards, wastelands and roadsides, forming extensive swathes of the weed, especially in moist, fertile, disturbed soils. Impacts biodiversity, poisonous to humans, and a host of plant pathogens.
- Erect, branching, 0.5-1 m high. Stems, hairy, soft, becoming woody with age. Leaves, oval, broader at base, up to 7.5 cm long, smell of male goat when crushed. Flowerheads, in branches, flat-topped clusters at top of the stems. Each with 30-50 white, light blue or violet flowers. Fruits, small, brown and 1-seeded. Plants have shallow fibrous roots
- Spread: contaminant of seeds of other species; on clothes, machinery and vehicles; trade in medicinal plants and ornamentals.
- Biosecurity: seed is available on the internet.
- Biocontrol: Little known.
- Cultural control: hand weed or plough and disc (before plants set seeds); flood fallow (if practical); vehicle hygiene.
- Chemical control: in Australia (and Fiji): glyphosate. In Fiji, also 2,4-D.

Common Name

Goatweed; it is also known as billygoat weed (or billy goat weed, even billy-goat weed), tropic ageratum, blue flowered groundsel.

Scientific Name

Ageratum conyzoides; previously, known by a large number of different names in the genera *Ageratum*, *Cacalia* and *Eupatorium*. It is also said to be *Ageratum conyzoides* subspecies *conyzoides*. It is a member of the Asteraceae.

A similar species, *Ageratum houstonianum*, is recorded in the Pacific islands (Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea).



Photo 1. Mass of goatweed, *Ageratum conyzoides*.



Photo 2. Young group of goatweed plants, *Ageratum conyzoides*, with maturing flowers.



Photo 3. Seedlings at flowering, goatweed plants, *Ageratum conyzoides*.



Photo 4. Goatweed, *Ageratum conyzoides*, with terminal and axillary flowers.



Photo 5. Close-up flowerhead cluster, goatweed, *Ageratum conyzoides*. Note, each flowerhead surrounded by green, leaf-like structures.



Photo 6. Close-up flowerhead, goatweed, *Ageratum conyzoides*.



Photo 7. White flowers, goatweed, *Ageratum conyzoides*.



Photo 8. Seeds, goatweed, *Ageratum conyzoides*.



Photo 9. Blue billy goat weed, *Ageratum houstonianum*.



Photo 10. Blue billy goat weed, *Ageratum houstonianum*.



Photo 11. Comparison between flower-heads of *Ageratum conyzoides* (left) and *Ageratum houstonianum* (right).

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Adapted from Billygoat weed (*Ageratum conyzoides*) (2018) Weeds of SE Qld and Northern NSW. Lucidcentral. (<https://www.lucidcentral.org/editors-pick-animal-and-plant-identification-keys/key-to-weeds-of-se-qld-and-northern-nsw>); and additional information from CABI (2019) *Ageratum conyzoides* (billy goat weed). Invasive Species Compendium. (<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/3572>). Photos 1,2,5&10,11 Sheldon Navie, Queensland, Australia. Photo 4 Minghong Photo of *Ageratum conyzoides*. Photos 8&9 Forest & Kim Starr. Starr Environmental, Bugwood.org.

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