

## Moth plant – fact sheet

Moth plant (*Araujia hortorum*), also called kapok plant, is a native of Argentina and Brazil and has been in New Zealand since 1888.

It's well-established in the upper North Island and coastal Bay of Plenty and is expanding southward, into Te Puke and elsewhere.

Like pampas, moth plant is a problem weed especially to the kiwifruit industry.

- Pods form on vines following the summer flowering period. Pods split open when dry, typically in June and July, releasing the seed with pappus attached. Seeds are thus wind-borne and travel for kilometres. The pappus could attach to kiwifruit fruit, but pods are unlikely to split open en-masse until after picking.



- There is only one biological agent being used for moth plant – the moth plant beetle. Although the success of this has been somewhat mixed, the beetle method is still in its infancy and appropriate time is required to judge its long-term utility.

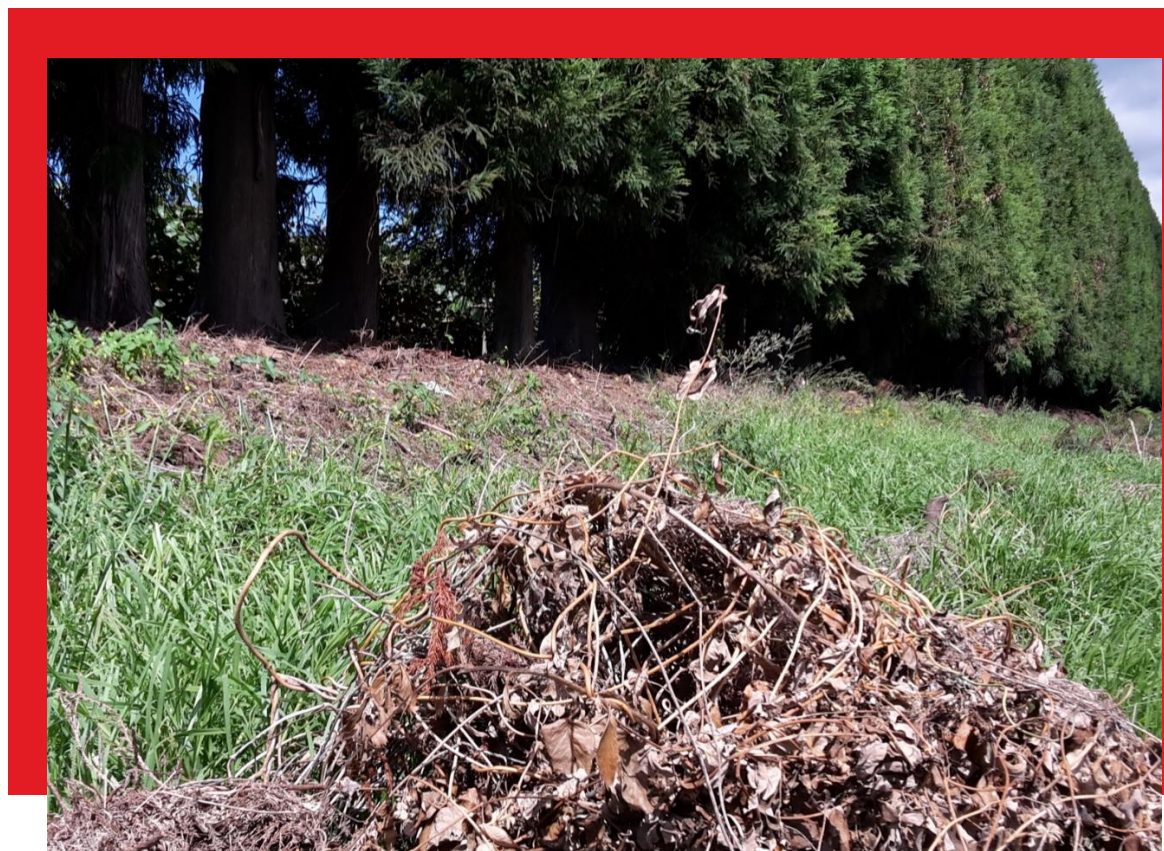
- The Bay of Plenty Regional Pest Management Plan 2020 – 2030 classifies Moth plant as a Sustained Control pest. A Sustained Control programme is implemented where a pest is well established and preventing its spread is no longer a realistic objective. Management of the pest focuses on reducing its impact and its stopping spread to other properties. Occupiers must control moth plant if required by written direction by and authorised person.



- Although moth plant is a serious nuisance to the kiwifruit industry, enforcement actions are not possible in the current

Regional Pest Management Plan. Individual landowners are encouraged to control infestations on land they own or occupy, and advice can be given on appropriate control methods.

- Control can be quite difficult – moth plant snaps off just below ground level if you pull it. It is then likely to regrow. Locating vines and digging them out works well – spring or early summer is the best time to control Moth Plant; in late summer or autumn the pods will be forming; drag any formed pods out of shelter trees. Collect, bag, and dispose of all seed pods to prevent spread.
- The sap can cause quite severe dermatitis, so workers need to wear gloves, protective clothing and eye protection. Cut vines off within 20 cm of ground level and paste with a picolram gel / 25% glyphosate stump mix. Alternatively, hand pull to kill the plants, and spray ground-dwelling vines with a herbicide containing active ingredients Glyphosate Triclopyr.



*Images: Photo 1 - Moth plant leaves, flowers and developing seed pods; Photo 2 - Moth plant seeds are trapped within shelter belts when flying in the wind over winter months. They then fall to the ground and germinate to infest the shelter belt the following summer. Photo 3 - An orchard team has recently cleared their shelter belts of Moth plant in Welcome Bay.*