

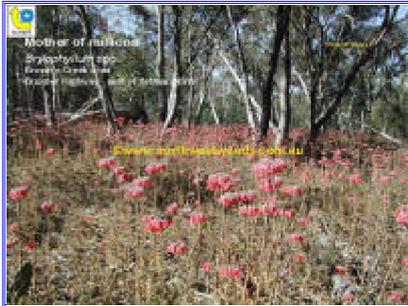


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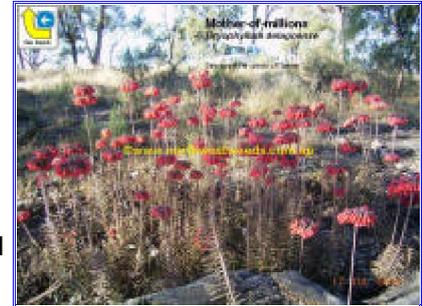
Mother-of-millions

by Les Tanner, North West Weeds, Bingara NSW



Mother-of millions (*Bryophyllum* spp.) is a native plant of Madagascar. Its beautiful flowers have made it a popular garden plant in eastern Australia, especially in the drier, inland areas. Unfortunately, **mother-of-millions is highly toxic to stock!**

The plant's ability to reproduce in such large numbers and to withstand droughts explains why it has escaped from gardens and rubbish tips to become a serious problem in many rural areas. [Photo, above left -



shows how mother-of-millions can take over in rural areas - next to Bruxner Highway between Bonshaw and Yetman NSW - click on photo for larger view]

Mother-of millions is well named. Each plant produces thousands of plantlets which detach to form new plants. This close-up photo [left] of an actively-growing young plant shows the reproductive potential of a just one plant. A succulent, and drought-tolerant, most of these plant parts will survive.



EFFECT ON ANIMALS

Mother-of millions, particularly the flowers, can be **VERY POISONOUS**. It continues to claim the lives of cattle throughout the north west. In one of the worst reported cases in recent times, 125 head of cattle died after feeding on mother-of-millions on a travelling stock reserve, Moree area, 1997 (- Michael Kane, Moree).

Greatest risk is when the plant is in flower, and especially during dry times when feed is scarce. And, when cattle are stressed or in unfamiliar territory (eg a new paddock) they are more likely to try plants they wouldn't normally touch.

To quote from the Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries [Fact Sheet \[P33 Mar 13\]](#) on mother-of-millions, **POISONING SYMPTOMS** in cattle include signs of dullness, loss of appetite, diarrhea and heart failure. There are two responses to poisoning; acute, where cattle die within a day, and chronic, where cattle may take up to 5 days to die. Cattle can slowly recover if insufficient plant material was eaten. **VET'S TREATMENT OF POISONED STOCK** must occur within 24 hours of plant material consumption. The treatment is intense and needs to be given by or under the direction of a veterinarian. +



IDENTIFICATION

Mother-of millions is a hardy, drought-resistant succulent. The plants grow upright (to 1m) thin stems, each containing numerous small branches+or leaves. There are also hybrid versions (see photo, right) which have similar flowers but serrated "branches". Each leaf produces many plantlets. The plant flowers in the winter; this is when the plant is most dangerous to stock!



PLEASE NOTE that there other cacti-type plants with flowers similar to mother-of-millions. Most of these other cacti-type plants don't have stems like mother-of-millions, which are generally about the same thickness from top to bottom. Also, mother-of-millions plants don't have large, flat, serrated leaves+at the base of the plant as does, for example, *Cotyledon orbicularis* (photo, below right). Be aware that these other look-alikes may still be toxic to animals . the best advice is to avoid all risk!

MORE INFORMATION

Poisonous Plants Handbook for Farmers & Graziers by EJ McBarron, Inkata Press ISBN 0909605297. NSW Department of Primary Industries has on its weeds website a [Primefact on mother-of-millions](#).



CONTROL METHODS



Non-Chemical Options: Plants can be removed and burnt or stored in black plastic bags until completely destroyed. Encourage a strong pasture competition.

Biological control: "South African citrus thrips" are present in southern Qld and northern NSW. The thrips are having a significant impact on large mother-of-millions infestations and flowering generally (the most dangerous feature of the plant) has been reduced significantly. More information is available on the [Queensland Dept of Agriculture & Fisheries \(website\) factsheet P33 Jun 2013](#) or by contacting North West Weeds. Photo (left) compares mother-of-millions with and without the effect of the thrips...

Chemical Options: Winter is the best time to treat mother-of-millions. The plants are then in flower and easier to find. According to NSW DPI's excellent booklet "*Noxious and Environmental Weed Control Handbook 4th Edition*", chemical treatments for mother-of-millions include:

Chemical options	Rate: Spot/Boom	Comments
Triclopyr 300g/L+ Picloram 100 g/L + Aminopyralid 8 g/L- eg Grazon Extra®	500 mL per 100 L of water	Apply at flowering, add a surfactant.
Triclopyr 300g/L+ Picloram 100 g/L - eg Grazon DS®	500 mL per 100 L of water	Apply at flowering, add a surfactant.
2,4-D 300 g/L eg Affray®	700 mL	Thorough even coverage of leaves
2,4-D amine 625 g/L Various trade names eg Amicide®	400 mL per 100 L of water	Thorough, even coverage of leaves and plantlets is necessary. Add a wetting agent
Fluroxypyr 333 g/L eg Starane Advanced®	360 mL per 100 L of water	Actively growing seedlings and young plants before flowering
Fluroxypyr 200 g/L eg Starane 200®	600 mL per 100 L of water	Actively growing seedlings and young plants before flowering
Metsulfuron methyl Various trade names eg Brushoff®	10 g metsulfuron methyl plus 200 mL glyphosate 360 to 100 L water. Add non-ionic surfactant as per label	Hand directed spraying only. Apply at or just prior to flowering. Refer to APVMA permit PER14877 for full details (NSW only. Expires 30 9 2024)
PLUS glyphosate 360 g/l APVMA permit PER14877		

IMPORTANT: USE OF PESTICIDES – ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

Pesticides must only be used for the purpose for which they are registered and must not be used in any other situation or in any manner contrary to the directions on the label. Never use a herbicide in any way contrary to the label recommendations.

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this web site is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of North West Weeds or the user's independent adviser.

Les Tanner 16/07-2015