

# Moth plant

*Araujia sericifera*

Family Asclepiadaceae



## Identification

- Rapid growing, **evergreen**, perennial climber
- **Leaves** are **opposite**, up to 12cm long, thick and often with wavy margins
- **Leaves** are **dark green** on top; **underneath** they are **grey-green** and covered in fine hairs
- **Stems** have **fine hairs**, and are flexible with **milky sap** (toxic!)
- **White, fragrant, bell-shaped flowers** (December to May) can trap moths, butterflies and bees
- Large, **pear-shaped pods** contain many **silky**, tufted **seeds**



Moth plant flower Photo: Plant Protection Society



Moth plant sprawling over a fence Photo: Auckland Regional Council

## Why is it a problem?

Moth plant grows rapidly to the canopy where it smothers and kills the vegetation beneath. It produces light, fluffy, wind-dispersed seeds that are easily carried long distances. The milky sap is toxic and a skin irritant so avoid coming into contact with the sap.

## Where is it a problem?

Moth plant is a garden escape. It is more common in warmer areas but can invade lowland and coastal habitats, shrublands, forests, gardens and waste areas.

## Status

Although moth plant used to be sold by garden centres, it is now deemed an unwanted organism. Now it cannot be sold, propagated or pieces given away in New Zealand. Please report all sightings to the Weed Surveillance Officer, Department of Conservation, (03) 371 3719.



Moth plant seed pods Photo: C. Howell. Inset: Auckland Regional Council