



Ricinus communis **CASTOR OIL PLANT**

SEPTEMBER 2008

Other common names for *R. communis* include Castor Bean and Palma Christi.

DESCRIPTION

A tall robust shrub to 3 metres high which reproduces by seed. Stems are dull pale green tinged with red. They are stout, hollow and branching. Leaves are glossy dark red to reddish brown when young, glossy green when mature. The leaf blade is divided into seven to nine serrated lobes, each with a prominent midvein radiating from the point of attachment of the leaf stalk. The leaves have a nauseating odour when crushed. Castor Oil Plant has small reddish green flowers. The fruits also reddish green and round in a softly spined capsule 1 to 3 cm diameter, consisting of three segments each containing one seed.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN HEALTH

The seeds of Castor Oil Plant are highly toxic and temporary blindness may occur if the sap is squirted into the eyes. Plants grow vigorously in disturbed areas and out-compete native species for resources thus excluding them.

HABITAT

Castor Oil Plant prefers warm–temperate and sub tropical regions. It commonly occurs along gullies, watercourses and roadsides as well as in vacant blocks and other disused areas.



Seed pods of Castor Oil Plant.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Castor Oil Plant is a native of Africa and Euro-Asia that has been introduced to most countries of the world. It was introduced to Australia during early settlement and was listed as present in the colony in 1803. It is now present in all states except Tasmania.

DECLARATION

Castor Oil Plant has been gazetted as a noxious weed through much of New South Wales. The Noxious Weeds Act 1993 is an instrument serving the protection of our environment, general health of the community and agricultural production. Under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 all noxious weeds must be controlled. The act applies to all landowners and occupiers. This weed has a control category of class 4. For class 4 noxious weeds: *“The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled according to the measures specified in a management plan published by the local control authority”*,. Failure to comply with the prescribed categories may result in a fine of 100 penalty units.

CONTROL

Individual plants are easily dug out, or with very large plants the Cut and Paint method may be more appropriate. Chemical control is effective. Although Castor Oil Plant is tolerant of some herbicides an overall spray of Glyphosate (1:100) gives good results. Apply when plants are actively growing, thoroughly wetting leaves and stems. Use of herbicides should be done in accordance with label recommendations and all safety directions as indicated on the label should be followed. Regular follow up is essential. Council staff can provide further information if required.



Castor Oil Plant.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
Bushcare or Greenweb Units
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COUNCIL

