

# Miconia in Tweed Shire



*Miconia calvenscens* – Velvet Tree

# *Miconia* spp.

- Native to Central and South America
- Tahiti – ‘*green cancer*’
- Hawaii – ‘*purple plague*’
- Townsville – *Since 1963*
- A botanical curiosity – collectors plant - popular through the '80s and '90s



# Is it a threat to Australia?

## The Tahiti experience

- Importation of all miconia species into Australia is prohibited under Australian quarantine regulations.



# In NSW

- 16 plants seized in 2003
- Another in 2004
- Since then – no other known infestations in NSW



# *The problem*

- Miconia is an unusually aggressive invader of moist rainforest habitats.
- Under favourable conditions, miconia will form dense thickets in rainforest understoreys and can completely replace native vegetation.
- It has the potential to cause irreversible damage to rainforests.



## *But wait, there's more!*

- Fruit is dark purple and about 1 cm in diameter.
- It is sweet-tasting and very attractive to birds.
- Most seeds remain dormant until stimulated by an opening in the canopy, although seeds will also germinate under heavy shade.
- Seeds remain viable in the soil for 5 or more years.



# *Miconia* spp. W1

- All *Miconia* must be continuously suppressed and destroyed.
- A new occurrence
- Rapid detection of source
- Unwitting landowners – for 15 years
- Very willing to assist
- Big question is – *Where else has it gone?*

