

Commelina benghalensis

Recognize the problem

Family: Commelinaceae (dayflower family or spiderwort family)

Common names: wandering Jew, Bengal dayflower, tropical spiderwort

French: Comméline du Bengale; **Kinyarwanda:** Inteja; **Luganda:** Ennanda; **Chichewa:** Khovani.

Annual or perennial (depending on moisture conditions) fleshy, creeping broadleaved herb (10-30 cm high); stems trailing along the ground, or ascending, branched and rooting at the nodes; the plant also produces underground stolons.

Leaves: Dark green, alternate, 3-7 cm long and 1-3 cm wide; oval with a pointed tip. Leaf sheath often with reddish hairs towards the tip.

Flowers: Very small with three lilac blue petals (3-4 mm long), the lower rather smaller than the two side ones; also produces underground flowers, which grow on burrowing rhizomes and do not open, are white and very small.

Background

Origin: Tropical and subtropical regions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Introduction: By seed or plant fragments in farm equipment and products and, to a lesser degree, nursery containers.

Habitat: Tropical and subtropical regions. It requires moist soil conditions for establishment; once established it has a high drought tolerance; grows in a wide range of habitats and is abundant on all soil types.

Spread: By seeds or vegetatively, on machinery. It spreads by runners which root at the nodes and by re-establishment of stem fragments.

Invades: Crops, including sugarcane, maize and pineapples, gardens, disturbed sites, forest edges and road sides.

Impact: The economic importance of *C. benghalensis* is related to its persistence in cultivated lands and the difficulty associated with its control. The weed seriously competes with arable and plantation crops in most of Africa. Its effects on crop growth and yield varies with each crop and with environmental conditions. Crops are affected most severely during the first 2-5 weeks of crop growth, but mature crop plants can also be affected. Groundnut flower production may be delayed by 1-2 weeks and nodules are also reduced depending on the intensity of infestation. Removal of *C. benghalensis* has been shown to increase groundnut yield by 27%.

Bengal wandering Jew flowers and leaves. (Photo by Ansel Oommen, Bugwood.org)



Underground stolon with flower (white globe). (Photo by FAO, Rome)



Scientific name(s) > *Commelina benghalensis*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



Authors: CABI Edited by participants from Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda at a workshop in Nairobi, February 2016.

CABI

tel: +254 (0)20 2271000 email: africa@cabi.org

Edited by Plantwise.