

Madeira vine is an aggressive, multistemmed evergreen climber with fleshy waxy-green heart-shaped leaves.

# Madeira makes its mark

**Petro Kotzé**

Once valued as an ornamental plant, Madeira vine (*Anredera cordifolia*) has turned into a nasty sight in South Africa and in particular, the Garden Route National Park (GRNP). The NEM:BA Category 1b plant has crept its way along the coastal zones of this national park from the town of Wilderness on its western boundary through to the Storms River section of the park and beyond to Port Elizabeth.

Records also show that it is present in the Sundays River valley area.

As a result, SANParks has recently completed its first species-specific strategic management plan in an attempt to manage the problem. NEM:BA Category 1b species are classed as major invaders that may need government assistance to be removed, as is the case with Madeira vine.

The plant, also known as mignonette vine or lamb's tail, is native to Paraguay, southern Brazil and northern Argentina. It's an aggressive, multi-stemmed evergreen climber with fleshy waxy-green heart-shaped leaves (the meaning of *cordifolia*) and greenish white flowers arranged along a

flowering spike.

It usually flowers during the late summer months (February to April). It's a threat because it smothers native plants, and this is particularly problematic in the protected milkwood thickets along the Garden Route coastline.

Dispersal is predominantly vegetative, as aerial tubers borne along stems are dropped from the canopy. Where found along water courses these tubers can be carried over long distances. The disposal of garden waste containing Madeira vine cuttings is a big contribution to its spread, especially in urban areas.

The aim of the new strategy is to identify the best methods for the monitoring and control of Madeira vine within and adjacent to national parks and to prevent it from spreading. Already it has also been recorded in the Table Mountain and Addo Elephant national parks and close to the Kruger National Park. The first step in the process is to map all known populations. Carlo de Kock, manager of the GRNP Biodiversity Social Projects, says, "Our focus at the moment is on monitoring and gathering of

distribution data."

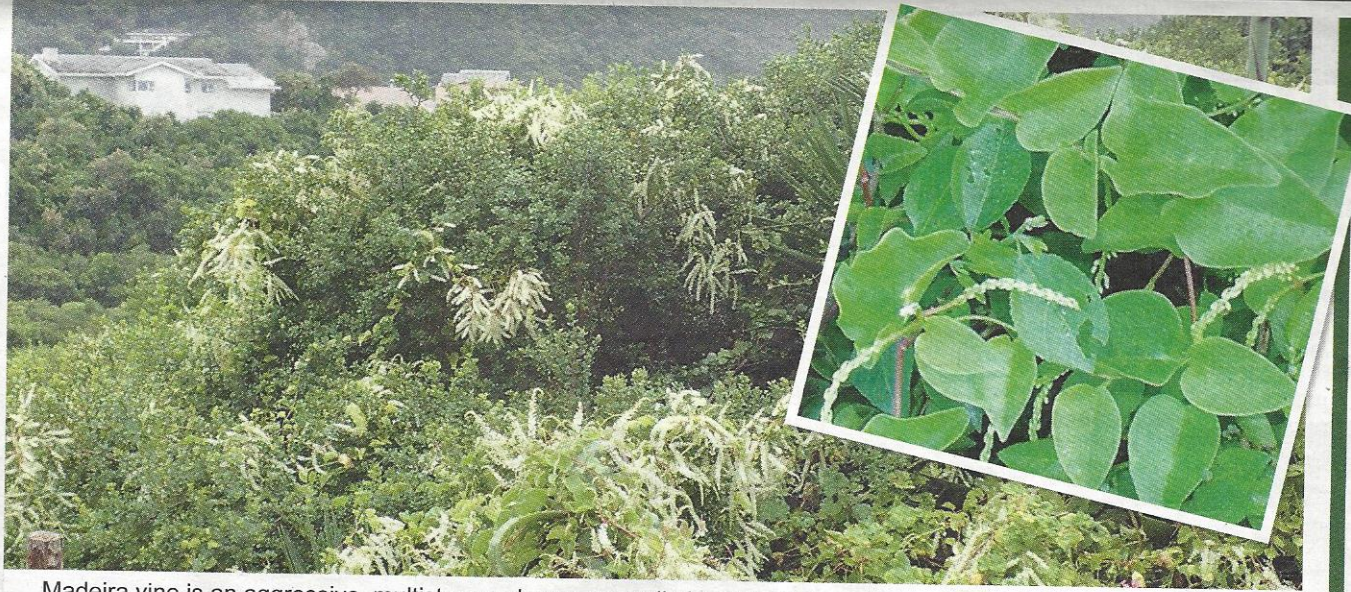
His team have already collected a whopping 150 points along the Garden Route, which represent individual populations. "It is so important to know where the plants occur so we can establish where we have to focus our attention," he says. For this purpose De Kock says they have already received funding to train a specialised BSP team.

Except for the work of the biodiversity support programme team,

It smothers native plants, and this is problematic in the milkwood thickets

biocontrol will also be deployed soon. The leaf-feeding *Plectonycha correntina* has been identified as a potential biocontrol agent for Madeira vine and while permission for release has been approved, there are currently not enough agents. The Agricultural Research Council-Plant Protection Research Institute is currently establishing populations for release on trial sites. Release is due in early 2017.

**Please help with this initiative. If you have seen Madeira vine, record your sighting at [www.ispotnature.org/projects/spot-madeira-vine-garden-route](http://www.ispotnature.org/projects/spot-madeira-vine-garden-route) or email information to [weed.alerts@sanparks.org](mailto:weed.alerts@sanparks.org).**



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