



The Layman's Guide to Invasive Alien Vegetation in our region Southern Cape Weeds Forum

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***Canna indica* – wild Canna, Indian Shot**

A very well-known invasive species is *Canna indica*, commonly known as the wild Canna or Indian Shot. **(Category 1b: Invasive species which must be controlled and wherever possible, removed and destroyed. Any form of trade or planting is strictly prohibited.)** Hybrid cultivars are excluded from the category.

This choice took us on an interesting tour into the history of garden flowers. *Canna indica* was originally described as an early flora of a region in Indonesia. Cannas were actually introduced into the Far East from America by the Spaniards sometime during the 16th century. Europeans visiting the Far East assumed them to be part of the local flora. Hybridising the species took place in France during the 1840's with a specific focus on foliage - to the extent that in England, Cannas were treated as foliage plants for quite some time. French nurserymen began producing the flowering hybrids during the late 1850's.



In our area *C.indica* is a common sight. Wherever garden refuse that include canna stems and rhizomes are casually tipped "over the side" or on vacant land we see these plants establishing themselves with the greatest of ease. Most gardeners will be familiar with the appearance of cannas in general – so how do we know which is which?

Identification: The plants are perennial with erect, unbranched, leafy shoots 1 – 2m tall. The leaves are large, narrowly ovate to elliptic and sheath the stems. Foliage range in colour from green to a purple-bronze. The flowers are attractive and colourful but non-fragrant and quite small in comparison to those of the large showy hybrids. *C.indica's* flowers are usually red or orange above and yellow below. Flowering time is generally from September to April and in some regions throughout the year. The fruits are green, spiny, three-valved capsules.



Invasive status: *C.indica* is a potential transformer and declared weed. Multiplying readily from rhizomes it forms large clumps, invades stream banks, moist sites, forest and plantation edges.

Control: No herbicide is currently registered and physical removal and destruction of the plant material is the most practical solution.

Indigenous substitutes: *Gladiolus dalenii* (African gladiolus), *Crocasmia aurea* (Falling stars), *Kniphofia spp* (Red hot pokers) and *Zantedeschia aethiopica* (White Arum lily)

References: FLORA by Brent Elliott, Alien Weeds and invasive plants by Lesley Henderson

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