



ALIEN INVASIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Scientific Name:	<i>TECOMA STANS</i>
Common Name:	Yellow Bells, Trumpet-Bush, Yellow Elder
Zulu Name:	insimbepuzi
Invasive Status:	CATEGORY 1
Countries of Origin:	Mexico & Southern USA (Southern Texas, Arizona & New Mexico, Southern Florida), Central America, the Caribbean, the Bahamas Northern Argentina and Brazil
Toxicity Status:	HONEY PRODUCED FROM THE NECTAR /POLLEN OF THIS PLANT IS POISONOUS
Flowers:	Bright yellow
Fruits:	Brown shiny capsules



***Tecoma stans* /Yellow Bells, Trumpet-Bush, Yellow Elder**, originates from the tropical Americas and is another of the plants introduced into the country for ornamental purposes which has become a problem and been declared an invader.

It is an attractive plant and one just has to look at the profusion of bright yellow trumpet-shaped flower clusters that are produced from October – May to understand why this species was much loved throughout the tropics and the reason it was first introduced into South Africa. It is the official flower of the US Virgin Islands and the Bahamas.

Anyone who has seen this plant in bloom can understand why one of its common names is **Yellow bells**, as it produces great, attention-grabbing, yellow blossoms. It became a popular landscaping plant, valued as much for its drought-tolerance as for its spectacular appearance.

It was introduced as a street shrub in Durban, but has now escaped into the surrounding open spaces and is out-competing the natural vegetation.

Tecoma stans is an evergreen annual shrub, 1.5 – 7 metres tall with dense leaves and yellow flowers. It produces masses of tan or grey bean-like pods 10 – 20 cm long that are each filled with many small winged seeds (some 208,000 seeds/kg). They are wind-dispersed and readily invade roadsides, the margins of natural forests and bush, as well as riparian zones.

Wind is the main dispersal mechanism of the winged seed, but man is also responsible for its movement over long distances.

Tecoma stans forms dense stands that displace indigenous plants and animals, out-competes and inhibits the regeneration of other plant species, reduces the productive potential of the land and impacts on biodiversity and has also been recorded in the Kruger National Park.

It falls under the **Category 1** plants of the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (CARA). Plants from this category are prohibited on any land or water surface in South Africa and must be controlled or eradicated.

Honey bees are attracted to it, but-unlike most flowering plants, **the honey produced from *Tecoma stans* nectar/pollen is poisonous.**

Tecoma stans grows at altitudes from 0 – 2000 m where the mean annual rainfall is 600 mm and above. It prefers clay loams, but tolerates a wide variety of soils and is particularly tolerant of alkaline conditions. It is fast

growing and thrives best in full sun, but is also shade tolerant, fairly drought resistant and can withstand some frost and temperatures as low as -2.2°C, but the roots can survive lower temperatures.

For further information and reading on the matter, you are invited to refer to the following:

- Alien Weeds and Invasive Plants by Lesley Henderson.
- A Field Guide to WILD FLOWERS KWA-ZULU NATAL and the Eastern Region by Elsa Pooley.
- Problem Plants and Alien Weeds of South Africa by Clive Bromilow.

Also a few websites of interest:

- <http://www.arc.agric.za/home.asp?pid=1031>
- <http://www.arc.agric.za/home.asp?pid=1&toolid=2&sec=1001> (For SAPIA news)
- http://www.sanparks.org/parks/kruger/conservation/scientific/ff/alien_biot_a/layout.pdf
- <http://biodiversityadvisor.sanbi.org/>
- <http://www.oocities.com/wessaaliens/species/species.htm>
- http://salbu.co.za/dkoa/NEMA_Weeds_050429.html
- <http://www.plantzafrica.com/miscell/aliens2.htm>
- <http://www.agis.agric.za/wip/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tecoma_stans
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tecoma_stans%2C_flowers%2Bpods.jpg
- <http://www.krugerpark.co.za/krugerpark-times-3-17-biohazard-23579.html>
- <http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus2/factsheet.cfm?ID=701>
- <http://www.hear.org/starr/images/image/?q=110215-1328&o=plants>
- http://www.type2solution.com/media/pdf/tecoma_stans.pdf

Should you reside in Mtunzini or surrounds and would like to contact someone from the **Mtunzini Conservancy** for further advice, **or** assistance in dealing with Alien Invasive Plants, **or** assistance in identifying which are Alien Invasive Plants, **or** which plants are soon to be promulgated as Alien Invasive Plants, please contact anyone of the following persons, who will gladly assist you:

Mike Butler – 083 654 3010

Doggy Kewley - 083 630 1839

Jim Chedzey - 083 326 0698

For advice on alternative indigenous plants which are best suited to be planted in the space that has been cleared of Aliens, ask any of the persons above, **or**:

Bruce Hopwood - 083 301 2958

Jonathan Cromhout - 083 630 6466

The **Mtunzini Conservancy** is a **non-profit Section 21 Company** that is continually striving for the betterment of our environment.

PS – Should you either reside in, or are due to visit Mtunzini, please take the time to visit & view the Mtunzini Conservancy's **Alien Invasive Plant of the Month display stand located on the pavement outside the entrance to MTUNZINI SPAR, to view a growing specimen of the *Tecoma stans* / Yellow Bells, Trumpet-Bush, Yellow Elder, plant.**