

SPECIES: *AGERATUM HOUSTONIANUM*

COMMON NAME: BLUE BILLYGOAT WEED / FLOSS FLOWER

FAMILY: ASTERACEAE

Plant Description

It is an annual or biennial herb or sub-shrub that can grow to be between 20 cm-1 m in height.

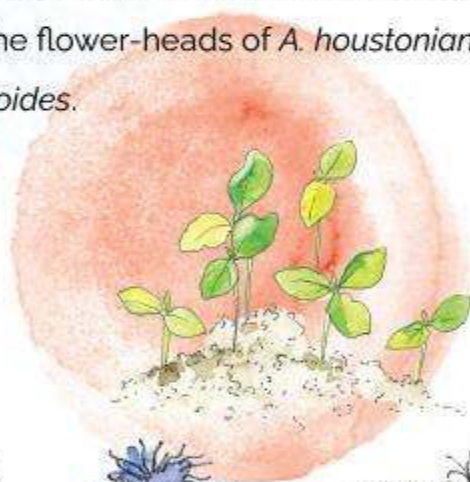
Stems can be erect, or prostrate along the ground (producing adventitious roots). The stem is reddish to green in colour with white to yellowish hairs. The leaves are arranged oppositely.

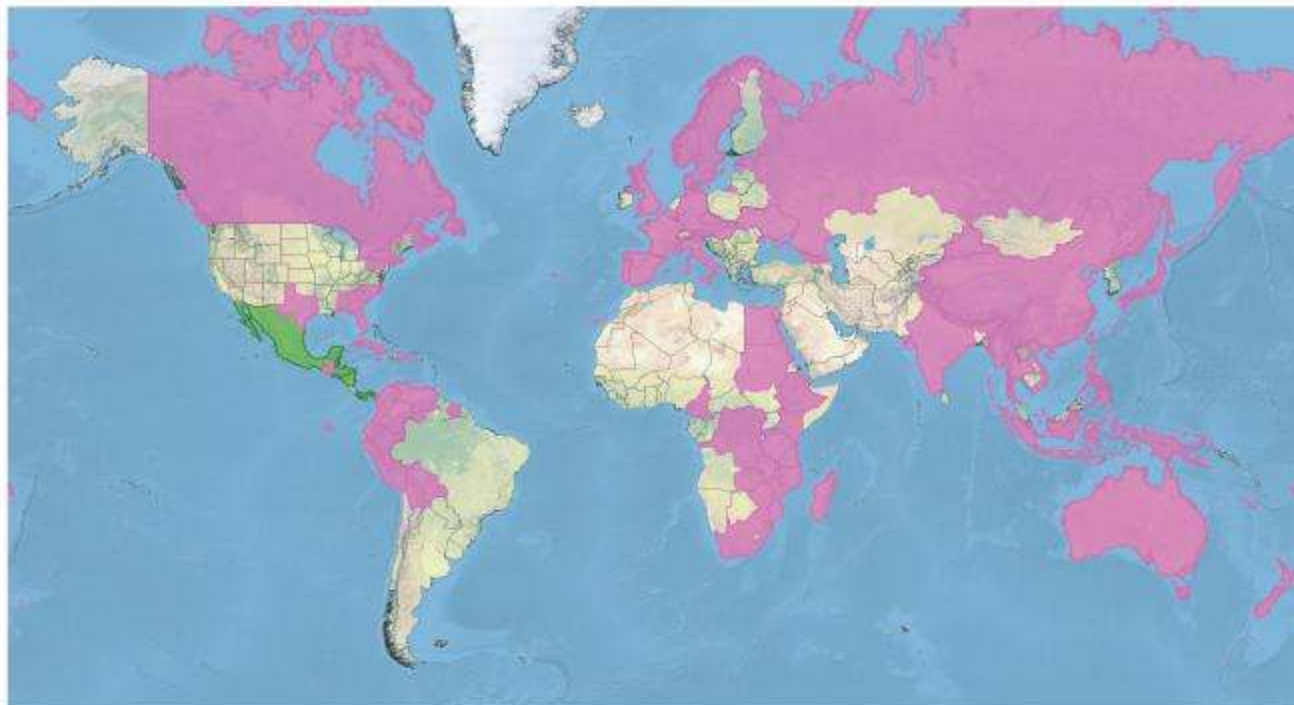
The leaf blades can be ovate or triangular (about 1-6 cm long, 1-5 cm wide) with irregular (dentate or crenate) margins. The upper surface of the leaf is dark green with hairs; the lower surface is pale green and can be smooth or sparsely hairy. Inflorescence usually at terminal regions with 5-15 flowerheads that are blue, lilac, lavender, rarely white in colour. Individual plants produce large numbers of seeds that are widely dispersed by wind and water; it also spreads vegetatively via its prostrate stems.



A. houstonianum and *Ageratum conyzoides* are almost indistinguishable in the field.

The base of the flower head of *A. houstonianum* (3-6 mm across) is relatively smaller than of *A. conyzoides* (5-8 mm across). Also there are numerous sticky hairs on the bracts of the flower-heads of *A. houstonianum* compared to only a few hairs in *A. conyzoides*.





CABI, 2022. *Ageratum houstonianum*. In: Invasive Species Compendium. Wallingford, UK: CAB International. <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/3573#toDistributionMaps> [accessed: 25/01/2022]

Introduced
Native
Origin not recorded

***Ageratum houstonianum* ASTERACEAE**

Origin: Central America and Mexico

Introduction: Introduced to India in the early 19th century, most likely as an ornamental plant.

Impacts: *A. houstonianum* is found along roadsides and in disturbed areas. It also grows in pastures, croplands, and in forest openings. It forms dense patches, excluding other vegetation. In northeast India *A. houstonianum*, along with the closely related *A. conyzoides*, is one of the early colonisers following slash-and-burn agriculture. *A. houstonianum* acts as a host plant for yellow-vein-disease causing Ageratum Enation Virus (AEV), and the Radish Leaf Curl Virus (RaLV), which affects ornamental plants and crops. Importing and growing the plant are strictly prohibited in South Africa, which is an indicator of the plant's invasiveness and impacts.

Management: Chemical control (using herbicides) has been tried. However, especially since this plant invades crop lands, the use of a 20% solution of salt to try and control the plant is recommended instead.

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