

## *Chromolaena odorata*

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### Scientific Classification

*Kingdom:* Plantae  
*Order:* Asterales  
*Family:* Asteraceae  
*Genus:* *Chromolaena*  
*Species:* *C. Odorata*



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### Plant profile

*C. odorata* is a herbaceous to woody perennial with a bushy habit which forms a very dense thicket about 2 m high, in almost pure stands. This many-branched plant becomes lianescent when it has the opportunity to climb on a support. Isolated individuals start to branch when they reach a height of about 120 cm. After the first year of growth, the plant develops a strong, woody underground storage organ, which can reach a diameter of 20 cm. Stems are terete and become woody. Twigs are slightly striolate longitudinally, pubescent, opposite-decussate. Leaves are simple, opposite-decussate and without stipules.

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### Environmental Requirements

*C. odorata* can grow in areas with an annual rainfall below 1000 mm, provided the dry season is not too long. *C. odorata* is heavily dependent on the availability of light. Its competitive strategy depends largely on rapid plastic responses that can only be achieved through a high productivity dependent on light. The response of *C. odorata* to fire is complex. It is true that it cannot establish in areas that are burned annually, such as African savannahs. However, if fire becomes erratic, or has a low intensity, *C. odorata* can develop and form a dense thicket that will even prevent fire in humid years. In dry years, this thicket will burn but the underground storage organ of *C. odorata* will then ensure rapid regrowth.

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### Uses

A very important though facultative use of *C. odorata* is as a green manure or fallow component. Being invasive, it has replaced native secondary successional species in much of the tropical Old World, and farmers have learnt to live with as a component of the farming system, especially in shifting cultivation and rotational practices.