

BIO-HAZARD

Tithonia diversifolia

Tithonia diversifolia (Mexican sunflower), a native of Central America, is a widespread weed throughout Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Southern Africa. *T. diversifolia* invades savanna, grassland, roadsides and riverbanks at altitudes under 600m. This plant has been recorded along the Crocodile and Sabie rivers within the park and is increasing rapidly in numbers on and within our boundaries.

Identification

Description:

Bushy annual or perennial plant reaching heights of up to 3 meters.

Leaves:

The leaves are dark green, hairy and the petioles are winged. Usually deeply three- to five-lobed the leaves are 150mm long x 120mm wide.

Flowers:

The flowers are bright yellow in colour and are found solitary on long stalks.

Fruits:

The fruit is in the form of a brown achene that occurs in a rounded, spiky mass.



Figure 2: *Tithonia diversifolia* bush



Figure 1: *Tithonia diversifolia* flower heads

Damage

T. diversifolia forms impenetrable thickets thereby restricting movement of animals and humans. It replaces indigenous vegetation at a rapid pace forming homogenous stands.

Control

Chemical control making use of a Glyphosate in water has been reported to be effective. No biological control agent is available for the treatment of *T. diversifolia* making mechanical and chemical control the most effective methods.

Contact address

Please report any sightings of *Tithonia diversifolia* in and adjacent to the Kruger National Park to:

Alien Biota Section
Private Bag X402
Skukuza
1350

Tel: (013) 735 4114 Fax: (013) 735 4051

E-mail: aliens@parks-sa.co.za

