

Broad-leaf weeds in rice

Billy goat weed (*Ageratum conyzoides*, L.)

Description

- Common name: Billy goat weed
- Goat weed is an aromatic annual invasive plant that invades cultivated fields, pastures, roadsides or forests.
- The plant grows erect up to 1m high. The stem is highly branched.
- The stem and leaves are covered with small white hairs.
- The flowers are purple to white and arranged in terminal clusters. Each terminal may consist 4-18 flower heads.
- When water is adequate, it flowers throughout the year.
- The fruit are black and each consists of a single seeds.
- It produces numerous seeds which are dispersed by wind and water and germinate rapidly.
- When the plant is crushed it produces a characteristic male goat smell hence the name Billy goat weed.
- The rooting system is fibrous and shallow.



Fig 1. Goat weed leaves and flowers

Source: M.D., Thurania



Fig 2. Goat weed growing on a roadside

Source: M.D., Thurania

Geographical distribution

- The weed is widely distributed in rice growing regions in East Africa and invades cultivated fields, wastelands and irrigation furrows. It is a problem mainly in upland rice ecosystem.



Fig 3. Inflorescence of Goat weed

Source: M.D., Thurania

Crop losses and associated damage

- The weed quickly colonises cultivated areas and therefore smothers rice.
- Reduced tillering of rice plants due to competition for light, water, nutrients and space.
- Rice plants are pale in colour and hence have reduced photosynthetic ability.
- Weed seeds contaminate rice grains leading to reduced grain quality
- 40% yield losses have been reported. In addition the cost associated with management of the weed reduces profit margins.

Contact experts: Mutiga, S., (Mutiga@uark.edu), Mwongera, D., Kirigua, V., Otipa, M., Kimani, J., Mugambi, C., Ngari, B., Ochieng, V., Wasike, V., Wandera, F., Wasilwa, L., Nyamongo, D., Too, A., Nyongesa, O. (IRRI); Zhou, B. (IRRI); Mitchell, T. (OSU); Wang, G. L. (OSU); Were, V. (TSL); Ouedraogo, I. (INERA); Rotich, F (UoEm); Correll, J. C. (UARK) and Talbot, N. J. (TSL). *E-Guide for Rice Production in East Africa (2019)*