

INVASIVE PLANT: Mikania (*Mikania micrantha* , Teb el Yas, or “Mile-a-Minute”)

DESCRIPTION: A very fast growing vine which twines around stems and leaves of plants. The leaves are arrowhead shaped, and are always produced opposite each other on the stem. The flowers are small and white, and are produced in clusters of dozens to hundreds of flowers. Flowering occurs from October to March in Palau. The seeds are tiny, with feathery extensions which can catch on animals or clothing, or fly long distances on the wind. This plant will grow in almost any soil, including taro patches, farms, and rock islands, and it can grow in full sun or in shade. Mikania grows from seeds, but it can also grow from small pieces of vine which fall on the ground.

THREAT: Mikania can completely cover trees, smothering and killing large areas of native forest. The death of trees can result in less food for native birds. Loss of forest can also increase soil erosion, leading to increased sedimentation and death of coral reefs. Mikania is also a threat to farms. It is rapidly becoming the worst weed problem in taro patches in Koror and Peleliu, and can also overtake banana plantations.

CURRENT STATUS: Mikania is the target of an eradication campaign by the Bureau of Agriculture and the Palau Natural Resource Council, with the support of several other organizations and agencies. The campaign has reduced the number and size of infestations. However, new infestations continue to be found.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: The public is requested to report any sightings of Mikania to Joseph Tiobech, the Invasive Weeds Eradication Officer, at the Bureau of Agriculture, telephone number 544-5804.

