**Leucaena leucocephala** (Lam.) De wit

The fast-growing, nitrogen-fixing tree/shrub *Leucaena leucocephala* is cultivated as a fodder plant, for green manure, as a windbreak, for reforestation, as a biofuel crop etc. Leucaena has been widely introduced due to its beneficial qualities; it has become an aggressive invader in disturbed areas in many tropical and sub-tropical locations and is listed as one of the ‘100 of the World’s Worst Invasive Alien Species’.

Leucaena is a prolific bearer of seeds (up-to 1700 pods per tree with each pod containing 20 seeds with 2-3 cycles per year); seeds are dispersed by rodents, birds and naturally. It forms dense monotypic stands in disturbed areas that it invades preventing the establishment of native plant species. It also excludes plant growth in its vicinity by an allelopathic effect caused by a chemical it produces called mimosine. Young leaves and mature seeds have a high mimosine content.

Leucaena was introduced to the Bonin Ogasawara Islands in 1862 and has had negative impacts on the native plant communities; in disturbed areas it invades early in succession preventing regeneration of native plant communities and promoting the establishment of more aggressive late-successional alien species such as Bishopwood (*Bischofia javanica*).

![Leucaena leucocephala](https:// commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leucaena_leucocephala,_Ogasawara_Islands.jpg)

**Photo Credit:** Wikimedia commons (User: *Ek Balam*)

Leucaena is one of several invasive alien plants that are a threat to the highly threatened sclerophyll forests in New Caledonia, dominating open and secondary forests. The sclerophyll forests are home to many endemic plant species some of which which are listed as ‘Critically Endangered (CR)’ in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species such *Pittosporum tanianum*.

**References:**

Bouchet, Philippe; Tanguy Jaffre and Jean-Marie Veillon (1995) Plant extinction in New Caledonia: protection

Global Invasive Species Database (GISD) (2010) *Leucaena leucocephala* (Lam.) De wit [Link]