

## **Lantana camara (common lantana)**

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### **Lantana camara (common lantana)**

Lantana camara has become an invasive species globally, severely impacting biodiversity and agriculture, particularly within India's forests and farmlands.



[Ref: Pixabay]

### **About Lantana Camara:**

- Lantana camara is a flowering plant from the **verbena family**, native to the **American tropics**.
- It has expanded to about **50 countries**, thriving between **45°N and 45°S** and **up to 1,400 meters** in altitude.
- Introduced as an ornamental plant, it quickly becomes **invasive**, especially in **Asia** and **Oceania**.
- The plant aggressively **outcompetes native flora**, leading to biodiversity loss and **agricultural disruption**.
- It forms **dense thickets, toxic to livestock and suppressive to crops and natural pastures**.

### **Physical Characteristics:**

- It grows as a **perennial, erect, or sprawling shrub**, up to 2 meters tall, capable of climbing up trees in favourable conditions.
- Lantana has **ovate leaves** with a strong odour and small tubular flowers in various colours, changing after pollination to signal pollinators.
- It is known for its characteristic "**tutti frutti**" smell.

### **Invasion in India:**

- Over **200 years** since its introduction, Lantana camara now occupies **40% of India's tiger range**.
- It has adapted to **climb, entangle, and spread**, affecting native plants and wildlife.
- The dense thickets **alter soil nutrients** and **reduce available forage**, leading to scarcity for native herbivores and posing health risks if consumed.
- Particularly affected are the **Shivalik Hills**, Central India's deciduous forests, and the southern Western Ghats.
- It is prevalent in areas modified by **human activities** and thrives in **warm, humid regions**.

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**Economic and Ecological Challenges:**

- **Cost of Control:** Eradication efforts are **labour-intensive and costly**, with significant health risks for those involved. Controlling Lantana in one sq km can cost up to **Rs 14 lakh**.
- While manual uprooting is practised, it is essential to follow up with the **removal of seedlings** and **possibly reseeded with native grasses**. Bird-dispersed seeds make complete eradication difficult.