

THE CONTROL OF *SIDA* SPECIES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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*Abstract.* Some *Sida* spp. are native to Australia, but three that are introduced have been declared as Class B noxious weeds in the Northern Territory. These are spinyhead sida (*Sida acuta*), Paddy's lucerne (*Sida rhombifolia*), and flannel weed (*Sida cordifolia*), the most invasive of these being spinyhead sida. Although the sidas appear to have been introduced from South America, they are now pan-tropical in distribution. Flannel weed and Paddy's lucerne were collected at Port Essington in 1845, and in the Darwin area in the 1850's. It is thought that spinyhead sida arrived a short time later. The sidas are widespread throughout the northern region, and in smaller quantities in the southern region of the Northern Territory. Sidases are vigorous, woody, semi-perennial plants that have the ability to quickly invade overgrazed improved pastures, and areas where natural vegetation has been cleared or disturbed. The sidases can be controlled mechanically, chemically, and biologically. Pastures can be slashed, giving limited control during the growing season. A range of chemical methods have proved successful. Field releases of *Calligrapha pantherina* (Coleoptera), a biological control agent of spinyhead sida and Paddy's lucerne, commenced in September 1989.