



Government
of South Australia

WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

YELLOW BURRWEED



Dense infestation of yellow burrweed



Yellow burrweed seedlings



Closeup of flowers

YELLOW BURRWEED



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Yellow burrweed, *Amsinckia* species, is an annual herb introduced from America. It consists of a group of very closely related species that have probably interbred since arriving in Australia. Yellow burrweed has become a major crop weed in Australia and it is therefore important to keep this weed off clean properties or to recognise and destroy new infestations before they become established.

Distribution

Eyre Peninsula	- isolated infestations
Northern pastoral	- absent
Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula	- scattered patches, more common in southern area
Murray Mallee	- isolated to widespread
South East	- widespread in upper south east, isolated in lower south east
Central region	- one small infestation otherwise isolated plants

Impacts

Yellow burrweed is a highly competitive weed in cereal crops and can drastically reduce crop yield. Its seeds also contaminate grain, and bristly fragments of the plant cause vegetable fault in wool. It may be poisonous to stock, containing similar alkaloids to salvation Jane, but no deaths have been recorded in Australia.

The staggered germination of yellow burrweed seeds makes control of infestations difficult.

Recognition

Yellow burrweed is an erect annual herb between 20 and 70cm high. Stems may be branched and are covered with short stiff hairs. The leaves have similar tiny hairs; the leaves at ground level are up to 20 cm long and form a rosette, with smaller leaves arranged alternately along the stem.

Flowers are bright yellow with five petals fused into a trumpet shaped tube 5mm long. The flowers are grouped along one side of a curved spike, which is up to 15cm long and curled right over on itself at the tip. The fruit is a group of 4 seeds surrounded by a bristly green calyx. The ripe seeds are brown to black, ridged and roughly pyramid-shaped. Yellow burrweed has a stout taproot with many lateral roots.

Biology

Yellow burrweed is not restricted by soil type but favours disturbed areas.

Yellow burrweed reproduces only by seeds, which are spread by stock and other animals, contaminated machinery and produce. They germinate in large numbers after the autumn break and may also have staggered germinations after later rains.

Seedlings develop into a rosette during winter and then produce flowering stems as the days lengthen. Growth is rapid during spring; the flowers first appear in August and flowering continues for two months. On the curved flowering spike, flowers emerge progressively from the base of the spike through to the tip. This results in progressive seed production, with ripe seed falling while new flowers are opening at the tip of the spike. Plants die with the onset of high temperatures at the beginning of summer.

Further Information:

Parsons, W.T. & Cuthbertson, E.G. (2000). *Noxious Weeds of Australia*. 2nd edn. Inkata Press.

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For more advice on recognising and controlling yellow burrweed, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board:



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