



Controlling prickly weeds on your property and nature strip

Caltrop and khaki weed are two of the most common and troublesome prickly weeds for gardeners in our region. Controlling them is the responsibility of all property owners.



ABOVE: Caltrop weed



ABOVE: Khaki weed



Caltrop (bindii, cat's head, goat's head, yellow vine)

Caltrop is a flat, sprawling summer-growing, annual herb. It has yellow flowers that grow in to a woody burr with sharp rigid spines.

The fruit of caltrop is formed continually throughout summer and autumn and up to 1,000 fruit can be produced on each plant. Caltrop can produce upward of 20,000 seeds per plant. The buried seed remains viable for several years.

This weed poses a threat to the horticultural and agricultural industry as it can easily spread in to crops and pastures.

Caltrop can appear all year round and the best time to control it is when young plants first appear, often following rain and warmer weather.

Between the months of March to May and October to December are also good times to control it.

Khaki weed

Khaki weed is a creeping perennial herb with reddish coloured stems and chaff-coloured prickly burrs.

Patches increase in size as new plants form at the stem nodes. The weed spreads very rapidly and seeds can remain viable for many years.

It is a troublesome weed in rural towns, occurring on nature strips, playing fields, caravan parks and saleyards. The seed heads of khaki weed cause damage to the feet and mouths of animals and causes a skin ailment in cattle and is believed to be poisonous to animals and contributes to faults in wool.

Khaki weed prefers moist areas for vigorous growth but can tolerate periods of drought due to its deep roots.

The optimum time for controlling Khaki weed is in October, November and December or following germination after rain.

Prickly weeds are easily spread

The fruit of Caltrop and Khaki weed is easily picked up by the feet of animals, tyres from machinery, prams, lawn mowers, bicycles, gophers and rubber-soled shoes. They can spread over large areas.

Both weeds are classed as Restricted in the Mallee under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1984. This means they pose an unacceptable risk of spreading in Victoria and are a serious threat to another State or Territory of Australia.

How to control prickly weeds on your property

The best time to remove prickly weeds is before they flower and before fruit, or prickles have emerged.

In urban and semi-urban areas the best way to control Caltrop and Khaki weed is to pull by hand, starting from the outside of the patch and working inwards to minimise the chance of spreading.

The pulled plant should then be placed in a plastic bag and disposed of in your rubbish bin or at a landfill.

You can also chip weeds using a shovel, ensuring you remove their roots. Chemical control may also be effective. Speak to staff at your local garden centre and always follow instructions carefully when using chemicals.

Changes in managing the landscape may also assist in slowing the germination process by planting and maintaining other plants that might outcompete the weeds.

Prickly weeds are a real nuisance and we need to take a stand as a community to help reduce the impact they have on everyone in our community.

Controlling weeds on public land

Council is responsible for controlling weeds on Council owned-properties such as public parks and gardens and nature strips that adjoin these.

We have a regular weed control program that focuses on removing prickly weeds in particular from spaces that the public frequents such as playgrounds and busy walking paths.

Weed control on nature strips and roadsides adjoining private land is the responsibility of the adjoining landholder.



ABOVE: Khaki weed infestation on a roadside

More information

There are lots of handy resources available to help you identify weeds and control them. Call Council on (03) 5018 8100 if you would like more information.