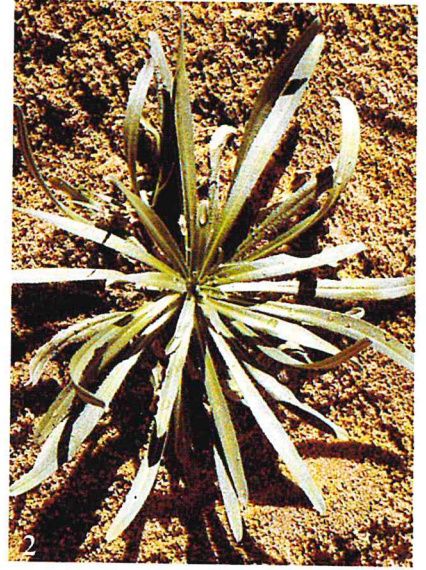


YELLOW BURR WEED

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1. Mature plant. (Photograph: Courtesy R.W. Medd and B.A. Auld - Department of Agriculture, N.S.W.)
2. Rosette, 3. Flower, 4. Burrs.

YELLOW BURR WEED

Yellow burr weed (*Amsinckia spp*) is a member of the Boraginaceae family like Paterson's Curse. It is a native of North and South America. Yellow burr weed is a major weed of cereals in northwest USA, the Wimmera and Mallee districts of Victoria and in New South Wales. Isolated infestations have been found in the wheatbelt of Western Australia. The three species of *Amsinckia* are declared plants (noxious weeds) throughout Western Australia. Their features are similar so for practical purposes they can be treated as one weed.

Significance

Yellow burr weed competes vigorously with cereals for light and nutrients, mainly nitrogen, having a serious impact on yields. The plant contains poisonous alkaloids which cause liver damage. Pigs, cattle and horses have been poisoned by eating contaminated seed; however sheep and poultry are relatively resistant. Yellow burr weed is resistant to con-

trol by the phenoxy (hormone) herbicides. It germinates over an extended period in the autumn and winter, making it very difficult to control by cultivation.

Description

Yellow burr weed is an erect herb up to 1.5m high. It has Y-shaped cotyledons (seed leaves) with rough surfaces and dark green to grey-green true leaves, with fleshy prominent midribs. The rosette leaves are oval up to 15cm long by 4cm wide while the leaves of the flowering stems are narrower. Leaves are sessile (stalkless) and arranged alternately on the stem. All leaves are covered with short stiff hairs and feel rough to the touch. The flowers are yellow to orange, small and numerous. They are formed on one side of a 10-15cm curved spike at the ends of the branches.

Four hard rough angular seeds about 2.5mm long, surrounded by a husk covered with stiff bristles are formed on each flower. The seeds fall to the

ground when ripe.

Ecology

Yellow burr weed is an annual plant reproducing only from seeds. The plant is a prolific flowerer and seed is formed over several months in the spring. The seed can be spread in badly graded seed wheat, in hay and chaff and on machinery and vehicles. The bristly seed husk readily sticks to wool and fur providing another avenue for spread.

Yellow burr weed grows vigorously on a wide range of soil types, including sandy surfaced mallee soils, black clays and red loams.

It is important to eradicate this weed and to prevent further spread in WA.

For advice on Yellow burr weed recognition and control, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone (09) 367 0111 or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.