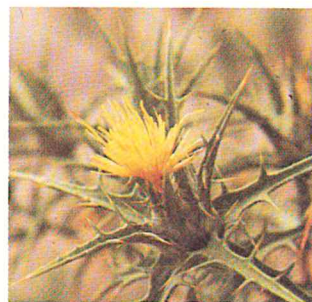
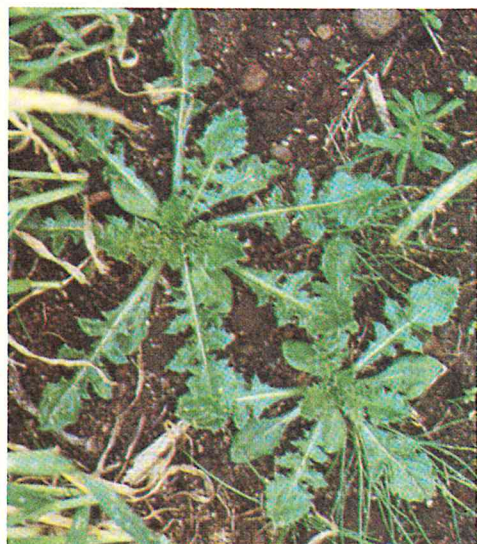


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SAFFRON THISTLE



LEFT: Saffron thistle flowering stem. TOP RIGHT: flower. LOWER RIGHT: rosette.



Saffron thistle is a serious weed in Western Australia. It reduces pasture and crop yields, contaminates grain and causes vegetable fault in wool.

In pasture, the weed's prickly growth discourages grazing amongst it and hence pasture value is reduced. Stock can damage their mouths eating hay or chaff contaminated with Saffron thistle.

In cereal crops, Saffron thistle reduces yield due

to competition for moisture, nutrients and light. Wheat containing Saffron thistle seed incurs a dockage by the Australian Wheat Board. Saffron thistle was originally introduced late last century and is now wide-spread in parts of the wheatbelt, south-east and Goldfields. Saffron thistle is a Declared Plant (noxious weed) in Western Australia.

Description:

Saffron thistle is an annual

plant. It forms a flat rosette which rarely exceeds 15 cm in diameter. The rosette leaves are dark green with a broad terminal lobe and irregular lobes along the leaf. Each lobe ends in a short spine.

A branched central flowering stem up to 1.5 metres high develops in late spring and then the rosette leaves die off.

Flowering begins in early summer. One yellow flower is produced at the end of each of the numerous

branches and branchlets. Saffron thistle reproduces only from the seeds, which are set in summer. The seeds are grey-brown, about 6 mm long, with prominent ribs and a smooth covering. They are equipped with a 'parachute' of stiff bristles. These bristles enable the seed to cling to materials like wool, fur and bags. This can be a means of spread, but the weed has mainly been spread by

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SAFFRON THISTLE

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sowing contaminated seed. Saffron thistle seed has a considerable dormancy

period. It has been shown in W.A. that some seed will survive for up to eight years. However, most seeds germinate in the first two or three years. This dormancy makes Saffron thistle a difficult

weed to control, but it can be done if a systematic programme is followed. Prompt action is essential to eradicate isolated patches of Saffron thistle to prevent the weed getting established in a new area.

For information on Saffron thistle control, contact the Agriculture Protection Board: Telephone Perth 670111 or any country office of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture