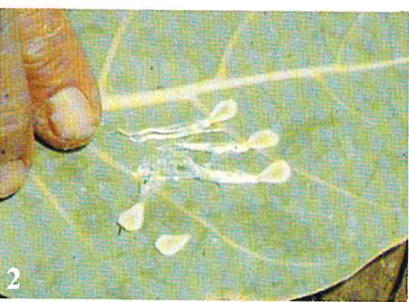


Agriculture Protection Board
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CALOTROPIS



1 Flowers and fruit of *Calotropis procera* 2 *Calotropis procera* seeds
 3 *Calotropis gigantea* flowers
 4 *Calotropis procera* tree.

C*alotropis procera*, commonly known as Cabbage Tree, or Rubber Bush, is a serious weed in the north-west of Western Australia. It reduces grazing and can be poisonous to stock and man. Dense thickets can be formed on alluvial flats along rivers, substantially reducing the value of the country. A closely related species,

Calotropis gigantea, is grown as a garden shrub and is often cultivated in gardens in the Kimberleys, but has shown no indication of spreading and becoming established as a weed.

Calotropis gigantea, unlike the weed species, has not been seen to set fruit in Australia and is propagated by cuttings. Both species are native to

the tropical regions of Asia and Africa. They were introduced to Australia either by accident with packing material or as ornamentals because of their attractive flowers. *Calotropis* is spreading rapidly in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. It establishes readily on overgrazed pastoral land and land disturbed by road making.

Calotropis is a Declared Plant (noxious weed) in Western Australia north of the 26th parallel.

Description

Calotropis is a perennial shrub, growing to 3 metres in height. The leaves are 10 to 20 cm long, thick greenish-grey and heart shaped at the base.

Flowering commences in August and continues through to October with the main flowering in September. Groups of up to 15 flowers are produced near the ends of branches. The small, scented flowers are about 2.5 cm across. The petals are mainly white with a purple blotch at the tip.

Calotropis procera reproduces by seeds

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CALOTROPIS

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which are produced in large, swollen fruit from September to November. The fruit is 7.5 to 10 cm long, containing numerous seeds, each having a parachute of silky hairs.

The fruit ripen from November to February. When ripe, the fruit burst and release the seeds which can be carried long distances by the wind. Besides not producing seed, *C. gigantea* differs from *C. procera* in having mauve-pink flower petals

and being generally larger, up to 4.5 metres high. The stem of both Calotropis species exude a white sap when broken. Prompt action is essential to eradicate isolated patches of Calotropis to prevent the weed from getting established in a

new area.

For information on Calotropis control, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone PERTH 367 0111, or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture.