

Agriculture Protection Board
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THORNAPPLE



1. Mature Plant 2. Seedling 3. Flower 4. Seed Pod.

(continued overleaf)

THORNAPPLE

THORNAPPLE (*Datura spp.*) is a member of the Solanaceae family like potatoes and tomatoes. There are at least six closely related species in W.A. Thornapple is often incorrectly called castor oil plant. All species occur in scattered out-breaks on summer moist land, mainly along the coast from Shark Bay to Albany. Plants may also be found on vacant lots in the Perth metropolitan area and in creek beds in the Eastern Goldfields. Thornapple is a declared plant (noxious weed) in Western Australia. Thornapple contains several poisonous alkaloids. The seeds are the most toxic part of the plant. Thornapple is seldom grazed by stock because of its bitter taste, unpleasant smell and spined seed pods. However, some children have

been poisoned by eating the seed. Animal deaths are usually associated with contaminated chaff, hay or silage.

Thornapple competes strongly with pasture plants for light and moisture.

Ecology:

Thornapple is a vigorous annual plant. Seeds germinate in late spring and early summer. It grows over summer flowering and seeding given sufficient soil moisture. Seed can be spread long distances with hay and chaff and in seed of summer crops like maize.

Description:

Thornapple forms a dense shrub about 0.6-0.9 m high. The leaves are grey-green with a wavy margin. The flowers are erect, trumpet shaped and white, sometimes tinged with pink. Seeds

are produced in hard, prickly, rounded seed capsules, 3-5 cm in diameter. Each capsule has four compartments containing many seeds. When dry, these capsules burst open releasing the seeds. Thornapple seeds are brown to black, 3-5 mm long and kidney shaped.

Prompt action is needed to eradicate isolated patches of Thornapple and to prevent the weed from getting established in new areas.

Suspect plants should be reported to the Agriculture Protection Board: Telephone Perth (09) 367 0111 or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.