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# AFRICAN THISTLE



1. Flower 2. Mature plant 3. Rosette

(continued over)

# AFRICAN THISTLE

**A**frican thistle (*Berkheya rigida*) is also known as Berkheya thistle, Hamelin thistle and Augusta thistle. It is a member of the daisy family (Compositae).

A native of South Africa, where it is not considered a troublesome weed, it is established over a small area near Hamelin Bay on the south coast of Western Australia.

**Significance:**

African thistle has many characteristics of a serious weed. The initial outbreak spread gradually over 50 Ha before contained by annual spraying. Although restricted to infertile coastal sands in W.A. it is found on a wide range of soils in South Africa, often far inland.

African thistle is a declared plant (noxious weed) throughout Western Australia.

**Description:**

African thistle is a herbaceous perennial plant 0.3 to 0.6 m high which looks like a typical thistle. It has hairless spiny leaves about 5-10 cm long with deeply cut spiny lobes.

The flowers are small and yellow on short peduncles (flower stalks). The petals are surrounded by sharply pointed concave bracts.

The seeds are smooth, 2.5 mm long and without the normal feathery pappus of other thistles. Seeds may remain dormant for several years in the soil.

African thistle has an extensive root

system with creeping underground stems (rhizomes).

**Ecology:**

African thistle is a creeping perennial plant. Shoots develop from rhizomes. Wider spread of the plant occurs by means of seeds.

The initial infestation appears to have been introduced as seeds in the ballast of timber ships using Hamelin Jetty.

African thistle must not be allowed to establish itself in Western

Australia. *For advice on African thistle recognition, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Jarrah Road, South Perth, telephone (09) 367 0111 or any country office of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture.*