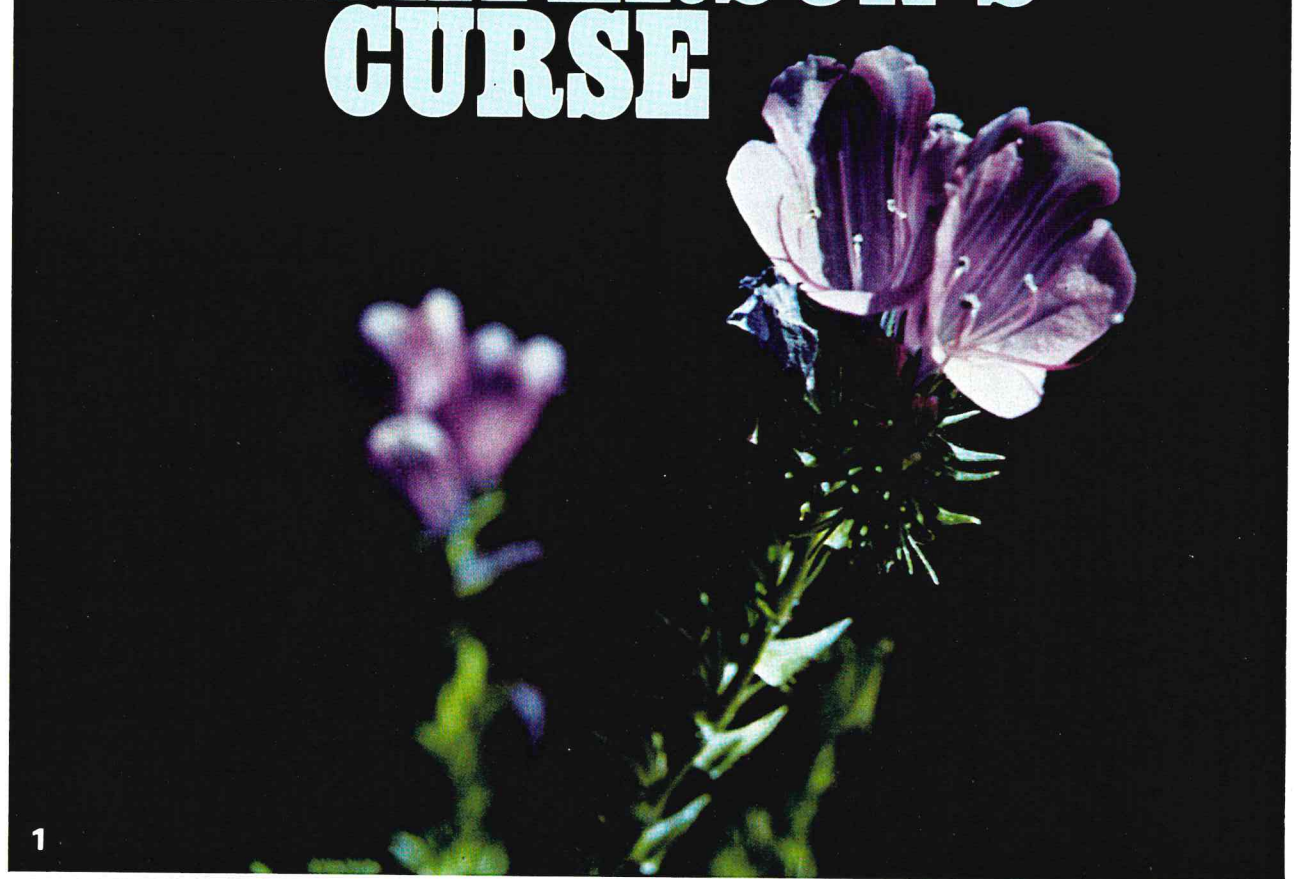


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Agriculture Protection Board  
Advisory Leaflet No. 74  
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# PATERSON'S CURSE



1. Flower 2. Infestation 3. Mature plant 4. Rosette

(continued overleaf)

# PATERSON'S CURSE

(continued)

**P**ATERSON'S curse (*Echium plantagineum*) also known as Salvation Jane in eastern Australia is a member of the Borage family. It was probably introduced into eastern Australia in the nineteenth century and subsequently into Western Australia as a garden plant. Paterson's curse is a Declared Plant (Noxious weed) in Western Australia.

## **Significance:**

Paterson's curse is a weed of pastures, particularly in the medium rainfall areas where it can grow very densely and provide severe competition for more useful species such as subterranean clover. It is not established widely in higher rainfall areas. Paterson's curse is generally regarded as non-poisonous but liver damage has been reported in eastern Australia when cattle graze it in winter and Heliotrope in summer. No reports of toxicity have been received in W.A.

## **Ecology:**

Paterson's curse is a weed of undergrazed sheep pasture.

Increased stocking will reduce the number of plants considerably. Cattle are less effective in controlling the weed because they do not exert the required grazing pressure. Paterson's curse is seldom a problem in crops because soil tillage prior to seeding encourages germination and kills seedlings. After planting the lower temperatures prevent any further germination.

Paterson's curse is spread only by seeds. Seeds may be carried externally on livestock and in their digestive tract and also in hay, chaff or silage.

Seeds may remain dormant in the soil for up to five years, so control must continue to be imposed until the bank of dormant seed has been exhausted.

## **Description:**

Paterson's curse is usually an annual plant, occasionally surviving for two years where summer rain occurs. It germinates in autumn and during winter, growing into a large flat rosette of dark green leaves up to

30cm across. In spring several erect branched flowering stems grow up to one metre high. The stems are covered in short bristles. Flowering takes place in spring and continues well into summer depending on moisture supply. Numerous bright purple flowers said to resemble a Salvation Army bonnet are formed on one side of the flowering spike only, hence the name Salvation Jane. Each flower is about 2.5cm long and produces four brown or grey wrinkled seeds surrounded by a husk covered in stiff bristles, which aid dispersal. Prompt action must be taken to eradicate isolated patches of Paterson's curse to prevent the weed getting established in new areas.

*For information on the recognition and control of Paterson's curse, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Jarrah Road, South Perth, 6151, telephone (09) 367 0111 or any country office of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture.*