

77

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# HOARY CRESS



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

(continued overleaf)

# HOARY CRESS

**H**OARY CRESS (*Cardaria draba*) is a perennial plant with an extensive root system, which is an economically important weed in many parts of the world. It originated in central Europe and western Asia.

Hoary cress is a member of the Crucifer (turnip) family. It is a very competitive plant, significantly reducing crop yields. It is seldom grazed, but when stock are forced to eat the plant their milk and meat may become tainted. Hoary cress is a very difficult weed to eradicate. It is a declared plant (noxious weed) throughout W.A.

## **Description:**

Hoary cress is an erect herbaceous plant about 250mm high, with branching stems. It has grey-green leaves covered in soft downy hairs. The leaves are up to 80mm long, broadly oval in shape and distributed alternately up the stem.

The upper leaves have no leaf stalk. The flowers are small and white with four petals to each plant. Numerous flowers appear between September and November, in clusters at the tops of the stems.

## **Ecology:**

Hoary cress reproduces by seed and by means of its pervasive root system which spreads laterally and down to a depth of two metres or more. Even very small pieces of the root cut off and moved by tillage machinery are capable of forming new plants. The seed is spread by stock and machinery and in grain. Seeds germinate in the autumn and form rosettes during the winter and spring. These usually die off in the first summer without flowering. However the plant has by this time developed an extensive root system which carries it through until new rosettes form in the following autumn. Rosettes can be

formed out of season if the root system is disturbed by cultivation. The seeds of Hoary cress are very small—about 0.5mm long. They are produced in a heart shaped capsule at the base of the flower. Seeds can remain viable for three or four years, but there is no long term dormancy.

Hoary cress is mainly a weed of cultivated areas. In South eastern Australia it occurs in cereal growing areas on a range of soil types, but particularly on alkaline black and red clay loams. It is less common on sandy surfaced soils.

*For information about Hoary cress identification and control contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Jarrah Road, South Perth, telephone (09) 367 0111, or any country office of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.*