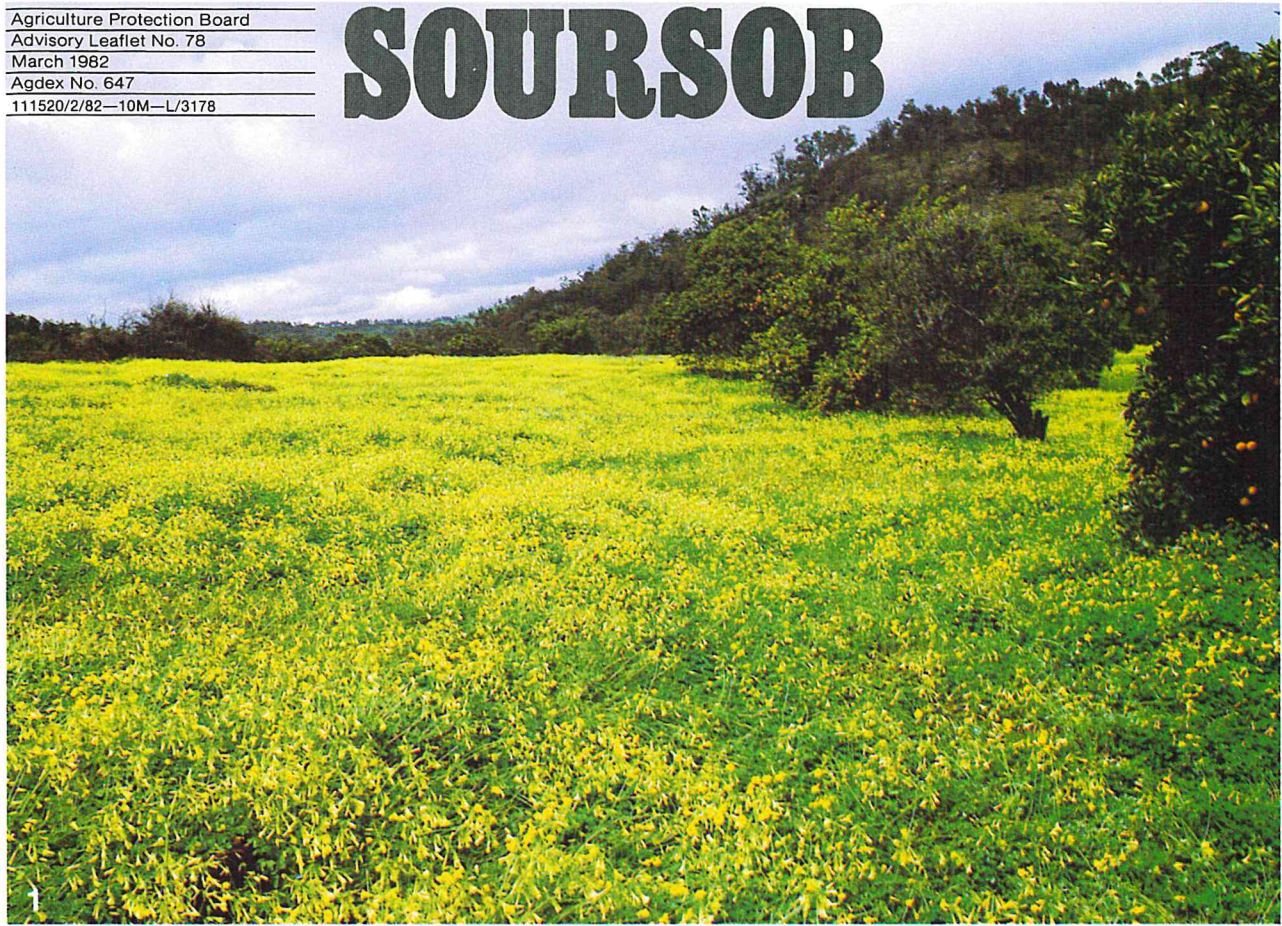


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SOURSOP



1. Infestation 2. Flower 3. Leaves 4. Bulb and tuber

(continued overleaf)

SOURSOB

SOURSOB (*Oxalis pes-caprae*) is a weed of pastures, crops, gardens and roadsides in the medium to high rainfall districts of Western Australia.

Soursob was introduced over 100 years ago as a garden plant and also as a contaminant with garden shrubs, vines and fruit trees.

In South Australia and parts of Victoria, it is a major problem weed. Soursob is a declared plant (noxious weed) in W.A. The Agriculture Protection Board aims to prevent existing infestations spreading to new areas. Where soursob is present in isolated patches, the aim is to eradicate the weed.

Significance:

Soursob has a high content of oxalates. When other green feed is scarce, sheep may eat enough to cause poisoning. Oxalates react with calcium in the blood, making this mineral unavailable to the animal. Ruminants may develop tolerance to poisoning because some bacteria break down oxalates in the rumen. Ewes are more susceptible than

wethers because of their higher calcium requirement during pregnancy and lactation.

Soursob competes with crops and annual pasture plants. It grows rapidly in autumn and quickly outgrows and shades most other seedlings.

Ecology:

Soursob is a perennial plant which rarely produces viable seed.

Flowering takes place from June to October. Soursob dies off quickly during spring. It is propagated by bulbs. During the vegetative growth phase cultivation may cause spread because cut sections above the parent bulb are capable of forming new plants.

Description:

The leaves of soursob consist of three clover-like leaflets on long cylindrical leaf stalks (petioles) with flattened bases. All petioles arise from the crown of the plant.

The leaves and petioles are almost hairless.

Many varieties of soursob have been identified. These can be distin-

guished by the pattern of markings on the leaflets and by the positioning of the green coloured style (female organs) relative to the two layers of orange coloured male anthers.

The medium and short styled varieties cause the most severe weed problems.

The below-ground parts of soursob are usually complex. A vertical stem joins the crown of the plant to the parent bulb. It tapers to a fine thread as it gets deeper in the soil. New bulbs form on this stem.

Beneath the parent bulb, a thin thread-like root connects the plant to a tuber. This tuber acts initially as a food storage organ.

In spring the tuber shrinks as it loses moisture pulling the new bulbs deeper into the soil below the old parent bulb.

For information on soursob recognition and control, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone (09) 367 0111 or any country office of APB or the Department of Agriculture.