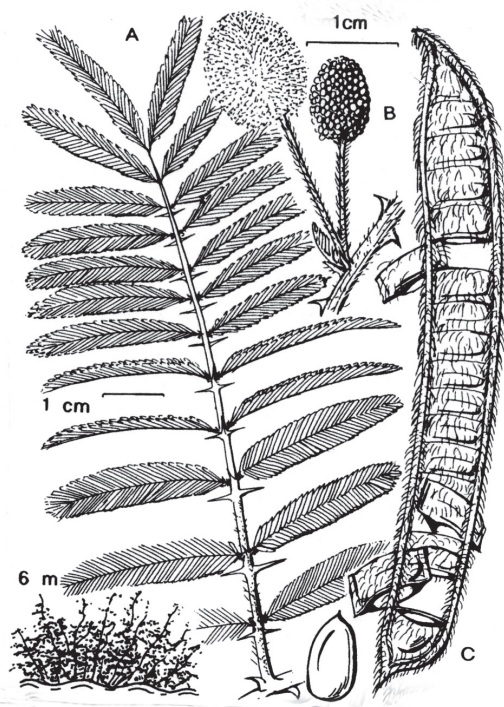


# WEEDS

## POTENTIAL DISASTER - *MIMOSA PIGRA* FOUND NEAR KUNUNURRA



*Mimosa pigra* looks like a leafy wattle shrub (it is in the same family, Mimosaceae) with pink fluff-ball flower-heads. Its main claim to fame, however, is that when touched, its leaves immediately fold up, giving it the common name of giant sensitive plant. A native of tropical America, this extraordinary characteristic led to it being planted as a curiosity in botanic gardens worldwide – it is

known to have been cultivated in Darwin well before 1900, for example. From there it has spread out to colonise creeks and wetlands across the top end of the Northern Territory and into Queensland.



Leaf showing spines. Photo: DAFWA

The plant is a spreading shrub that can grow to six metres high, with feathery leaves and prickles on both stem and leaves. It produces pods that break into segments each containing one seed - one

plant has been recorded as producing 220,000 seeds annually. The pod segments float, and can be carried long distances by floodwaters, germinating on the strand-line.

by traditional owners. All in all, it poses a very real and serious threat to the integrity of northern wetlands, with all that implies for biodiversity, cultural identity and tourism. Until very recently, this plant was not known to occur in WA (so you will not find it illustrated

*Northern residents and travellers  
- be on the lookout for this!*



Mimosa pigra bushes Photo: DAFWA

It forms dense impenetrable thickets along waterways and across floodplains, transforming them from sedgeland and grassland into monotonous tall shrublands. No native plants can compete, nor are these thickets habitat for native animals (though feral pigs are reputed to utilise them). They also disrupt hunting

in *Western Weeds*, for example) however, a patch has been found near Kununurra. It is hoped to eradicate the infestation.

**All travellers in the area should look out for plants, and report suspected sites to DAFWA's Pest and Disease Information Service on 1800 084 881 (Freecall).**

More information can be found on: [www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/mimosa/](http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/mimosa/) or [www.agric.wa.gov.au/declaredplants](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/declaredplants)

*[For an emailed one-page ID poster, contact the Editor.]*

*Illustration from "Weeds of Natural Ecosystems, Northern Territory".*