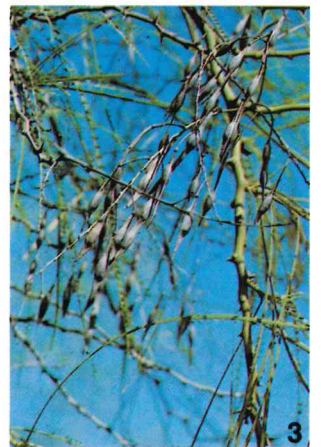




# APB INFONOTE

## PARKINSONIA



1. Mature tree 2. Flowers 3. Seed pods 4. Young plant

# PARKINSONIA

Parkinsonia (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) is a serious weed in northern pastoral areas of Western Australia.

Parkinsonia is a native of tropical America. It was introduced into northern Australia as an ornamental plant, because of its attractive foliage and its drought tolerance. It was then known as Jerusalem Thorn.

It is well established in tropical Queensland, the Northern Territory and parts of Western Australia. Hundreds of kilometres of the banks of Lake Argyle, Christmas Creek and the Ord, De Grey, Maitland and Ashburton rivers are infested with Parkinsonia.

It forms dense thickets, mainly along water courses. These become virtually impenetrable. Grazing is limited by the sharp spines. Parkinsonia shades out

other vegetation, hampers mustering, restricts grazing and blocks access to water points at dams and along rivers. It provides some grazing for sheep during the dry season, but cattle leave it alone.

Parkinsonia is a declared plant (noxious weed) north of the 26th parallel in Western Australia.

## DESCRIPTION

Parkinsonia is a legume belonging to the family Caesalpiniaceae. It is a perennial shrub or small tree growing up to 8 metres high. It usually has only a single stem but it may form branches close to the base following mechanical damage.

The trunk and branches have dark green bark. The leaves are light green, narrow, very thin and up to 30cm long, with numerous minute leaflets on both

edges. Stiff spines about 12mm long are formed on the branches at the base of each leaf. The spines persist on the older branches and stems.

The flowers are bright yellow, rather flat and fragrant. They are 1 to 2 cm wide and are borne in loose bundles on long flower stalks hanging near the ends of the branches. Later long seed pods with marked constrictions between each seed develop. The pods are 5-10 cm long and straw coloured when ripe. Each pod contains several hard brown seeds.

## LIFE CYCLE

Parkinsonia flowers mainly in May and June, but individual plants may flower throughout the year. Parkinsonia is very rapid growing.

## ECOLOGY

Parkinsonia grows best in moist conditions along river flats. It does particularly well on tropical black soils. Once established it withstands heat and drought well.

Parkinsonia produces large numbers of seed pods. Many of the seeds are hard and will germinate years later, in some cases after long immersion in water. The pods float and are spread by floods.

It is essential to eradicate isolated patches of Parkinsonia now. This will help to prevent the weed becoming established in new areas.

**For help in identification and control of Parkinsonia contact the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone (09) 368 3333, or any country office of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture.**