

# APB INFONOTE

## BUFFALO BURR

OS: 632-51(941) 607149



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1. Mature plant
2. Flower
3. Rosette
4. Burrs and seeds

(Photos: David Lund)

# BUFFALO BURR

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## **What you should know about buffalo burr**

Buffalo burr (*Solanum rostratum*), like many other poisonous plants, is a member of the potato family (Solanaceae). Buffalo burr is a native of Mexico and southern USA. From there it has spread throughout North America and to other continents, possibly as a contaminant of cereal grains. It is a gazetted noxious

weed in Victoria, South Australia and parts of New South Wales. Buffalo burr is a prescribed pest plant in the shire of Wickepin. It may not be grown in Wickepin and any existing plants must be destroyed.

Buffalo burr may be a nuisance elsewhere.

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## **Why buffalo burr matters to you**

Like most members of the Solanaceae it is probably poisonous, but it is seldom eaten by stock due to its spiny nature and bitter taste.

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## **What you should look for**

- Buffalo burr forms an erect branching shrub up to 60 cm high.
  - The stems are branched, erect and woody. They look grey due to the covering of hairs. They also carry numerous yellow prickles about one centimetre long.
  - The leaves are dark green with irregular lobes and minute, star-shaped hairs on the upper surface and prickles on the veins and leaf-stalks. The leaves are similar in appearance to those of Afghan thistle and apple of Sodom.
  - The flowers are yellow. They consist of five petals. One of the stamens is longer than the others, giving the appearance of a beak curving inwards.
  - The flowers develop a round berry about one centimetre in diameter which is covered in dense spines. Each berry contains 50 to 120 dark wrinkled seeds. Buffalo burr is very similar to Afghan thistle except that it has yellow flowers (as opposed to white or pale blue) and has a taller, more upright growth pattern and fewer prickles on the leaf blade.
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## **Why buffalo burr might succeed in WA**

Buffalo burr is an annual plant which spreads by seeds. These are found in a spiny burr which may be carried by stock or machinery. The burrs can also float short distances on water. The seeds are an occasional contaminant of cereal grains. Seeds germinate in autumn. The seedlings develop deep roots through winter and flower in spring forming

numerous spiny burrs. The deep tap root allows the plant to remain green until well into summer. After the plant dies it may be broken off by wind and blown about as a "tumbleweed". Buffalo burr is usually found in areas of cultivated or waste land. It prefers the heavier soil of river floodplains.

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## **What you can do about it**

Buffalo burr could become a nuisance in other areas of WA so you should control it anywhere in W.A.

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## **Where to find out more**

For further information on buffalo burr contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Baron-Hay Court, South Perth 6151. Telephone (09) 368 3472 or the nearest country office of the APB or the Department of Agriculture.

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