

APB INFONOTE

GERALDTON CARNATION WEED

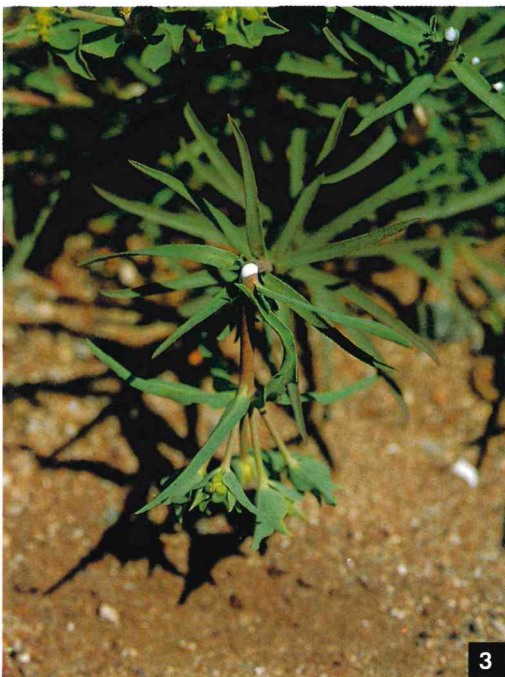
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1. Flowers and fruit
2. Infestation

3. Broken stem showing characteristic white sap.

4. Mature plant

All photos: Robyn Knox

GERALDTON CARNATION WEED

What you should know about Geraldton carnation weed

Geraldton carnation weed (*Euphorbia terracina*), is known as false caper in eastern Australia. It is a member of the spurge family (*Euphorbiaceae*).

In spite of its common name, Geraldton carnation weed is not related to the garden carnation and is not native to Geraldton.

It is a native of the Mediterranean but has been

widely introduced into Australia.

It is found in coastal areas of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, as well as Western Australia. It is a declared plant (noxious weed) in parts of Western Australia where it is not well established, in order to reduce the chance of it spreading to new areas.

Why Geraldton carnation weed matters to you

Geraldton carnation weed is of limited significance to agriculture, however stock that graze it heavily or eat infested hay may be poisoned.

Broken stems exude a sticky white sap which may cause temporary blindness if Geraldton

carnation weed is allowed to come in contact with the eyes.

Children, in particular, may be harmed by playing in areas infested with the weed.

What you should look for

Geraldton carnation weed is a leafy, pale green, erect perennial plant up to 1 m high, growing in dense stands.

Several red or green stems often arise from the same short crown. Like other spurges it exudes a bitter-tasting, sticky white sap from the stem when broken.

The leaves are sessile (stalkless) narrow (less than 1 cm wide) and 3 to 6 cm long with minute teeth on the leaf-edge near the apex. They are hairless and pale green and superficially

resemble carnation leaves in shape.

The flowers are yellow, inconspicuous and surrounded by five pointed oval bracts that form a cup-like shape. Each cup contains several male and a single female flower. The flowers occur on equal-length stalks arranged in clusters at the stem apex.

The fruit are small, about 5 mm long, three lobed and smooth, they contain many greyish smooth seeds.

Why Geraldton carnation weed might spread in WA

Geraldton carnation weed is a perennial plant with a deep root system.

Flowering takes place in spring and seeds are formed in summer. They germinate in late autumn or early winter and branch repeatedly forming dense clumps before flowering in spring. The plants die back during summer but new stems emerge from the crown at the break of season.

It spreads by seeds which are carried by vehicles and stock along roadsides and with

infested limestone rubble used for road foundations. The ripe fruit may burst open explosively, dispersing seed for several metres.

Geraldton carnation weed appears to be limited to poor sandy soils, particularly limestone-based coastal sands, in Western Australia from Geraldton to Esperance. Generally infestations are limited to waste land and disturbed urban areas, such as vacant building blocks, where competition from other plants is limited.

What you can do about it

Avoid contact with the sap. Treat infested areas prior to development to prevent it spreading.

Clean all vehicles and earth moving equipment after use on infested sites and before removal to clean areas.

Where to find out more

For further information on Geraldton carnation weed 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.
