

Khaki weed (*Alternanthera pungens*)

Fact sheet

What do they look like?

Khaki weed (*Alternanthera pungens*) is a creeping, perennial herb with stems up to 60 cm long. The vegetative growth on the surface is annual and dies off over the cooler months leaving a large perennial taproot beneath the surface. The prostrate stems are reddish in colour with fine, silky hairs on the surface. The oval shaped leaves are green with red-purple veins and grow in opposite pairs of unequal size up to 4 cm long. One leaf of the pair is significantly larger than the other. Small, inconspicuous white flowers are produced in clusters mainly in summer and are surrounded by sharply-pointed, chaff-coloured bracts.

Khaki weed reproduces both vegetatively from roots and by stems taking root at the leaf nodes, and sexually by seeds. The fruit is a prickly burr about 1 cm long and will stick to most surfaces in order to spread. Seeds will usually germinate in the spring but can also germinate in response to summer rain. New growth is produced from the root crown in the following spring.



Khaki weed spreads easily by prickly burrs that stick to shoes and vehicle tyres.

Why should Khaki weed be controlled?

The deep tap root makes Khaki weed relatively drought tolerant. It is a prolific seeder, with seeds remaining viable for up to 4-5 years in some areas. The burr containing the seeds readily becomes attached to just about any surface, meaning animals, clothing and car tyres act as perfect vessels for spread. The burrs will also respond to water movement and disperse into new territory using water as transportation. The pest will often be found along roadsides, camping grounds, town streets and waste areas particularly favouring areas that receive water over the warmer months. Khaki weed is not known to affect agricultural yields or livestock greatly, but may compete with Lucerne in some cases and is suspected of poisoning sheep, pigs and cattle in areas with large infestations.

What are my responsibilities?

Khaki weed is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. This means it is illegal to transport or sell this plant and all property owners have a responsibility to control Khaki Weed on their property. Residents who rent their properties also have obligations to control any weeds present. This also includes anyone who is leasing property unless other arrangements have been made.

What are the best ways to control Khaki weed?

A long term weed management plan using integrated techniques is required to tackle Khaki weed due to its abundance of seed and persistent tap root. Good hygiene practices while using

machinery or any movement of stock, feed greatly reduce the possibility of spread and new infestations. Manual removal of the pest such as cultivation, hoeing and hand pulling can be effective if the crown and the taproot is removed, insuring all root material is removed. If the tap root is fragmented during an attempt at removing the plant, new plants will grow from any material left in the soil. Herbicides can be applied when the weeds are actively growing.

Ongoing survey work of known outbreak areas for any emerging plants throughout spring to late summer is required, to control any germination in response to summer rain.

Prevent spread when the plant has set seed by using temporary fencing around the infestations to exclude vehicles, stock, foot traffic and pets, or covering with soil, mulch or gravel.

In lawn situations, Khaki weed can be controlled by keeping grass healthy and mowing grass on a higher blade setting. Khaki weed will quickly out compete grass and take over if lawns are cut short and close to the ground. Lawn clippings containing Khaki weed material should be burnt or disposed of in council bin for deep burial - do not compost.

For advice on control techniques contact your nearest Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board office. Please refer to PIRSA's [weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia](#) for advice on chemical control or on the [biosecurity section of PIRSA's website](#).



Manual control

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during an attempt at removing the plant, new plants will grow from any material left in the soil.

Chemical control

Herbicides can be applied when the weeds are actively growing. Timing is crucial when spraying is the desired method of control due to its dormancy period. It is important to remember that spraying will not kill the root system so using herbicide as a tool to slow the seed production rather than a means to and end is the aim. Spray consistently without missing a season until the pest is eradicated.

When using herbicides always ensure that you follow the label directions.

Do you have Khaki Weed?

If you think you have Khaki Weed on your property, Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board staff can provide advice on control and management.

More information

Email: ep.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au
Phone: 08 8688 3200

www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ep