

Wild artichoke (*Cynara cardunculus*)



Dense infestation of wild artichoke suppressing pasture. Photo: Tracey Hardwicke

Wild artichoke is an invasive long-lived spiny weed that establishes high density populations in pasture and native grasslands. It is a declared weed under the *Landscapes South Australia Act 2019*.

Description

Wild artichoke produces annual leaves and flowers from a perennial taproot which is large and fleshy.

Leaves mostly appear after autumn rains forming a rosette. Mature plants commonly grow up to 1.5 high and 1.6m wide. Leaves are deeply divided with long rigid spines and grow up to 90 cm long and 30 cm wide. The upper surface is greyish-green while the underside has a dense covering of fine white hairs.

Plants grow slowly over winter, then more rapidly in spring. Leaves start to die as the flower stems emerge in October. The stems are ribbed and spiny with smaller leaves and can grow to 1.8 m high.

Flowering takes place from November to February. Flowers are blue to purple and



approximately 10 cm across. The flowers are enclosed by tough spiny bracts. Plants typically have 16 flower heads each but can have up to 50. Each flower can produce 200 seeds.



Wild artichoke flower. Photo: Monica Seiler

Impacts

Wild artichoke forms dense populations of prickly vegetation that smothers pasture, reducing productivity. It competes with crops making harvesting difficult. The long, rigid spines on the leaves and flowers deter grazing animals and can cause injury to stock and people.

Wild Artichoke invades native grasslands, grassy woodlands and riparian vegetation where it suppresses native plant growth and degrades fauna habitat.

Unmanaged infestations quickly form dense thickets which hinder property access and use.

Wild artichoke is thought to cause contact dermatitis in some people.

Distribution

Wild artichoke is native to the Mediterranean region of southern Europe and northern Africa. It was introduced to Australia as a potential food and fodder plant.

Wild Artichoke grows mainly where annual rainfall exceeds 450 mm. It can also invade watercourses, roadsides, drains and wetlands in lower rainfall areas. It is most competitive in heavy clay soils.

Dense infestations are distributed throughout the Northern and Yorke region.

The plant reproduces almost entirely by seed.

Seed is spread by wind, sheep, cattle, water, mud, birds and mice.

New plants can develop from fragmented taproots which may be spread through cultivation or grading.

Control methods

Control of Wild Artichoke requires a long-term approach. The key to plant control is to exhaust the seed bank and destroy the large, long-lived taproot.

Control should begin with isolated patches and then work towards the larger infestations.

Herbicides are effective from June to November while the plant is in the rosette stage.

Hand grubbing of scattered plant is effective in suppressing new season growth. Slashing plants when the flower stalks form can restrict flowering and seed production.

For advice on chemical control techniques contact the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board. Please refer to the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* for advice on chemical control. You can find it on Biosecurity SA's website at www.pir.sa.gov.au.

More information

Northern and Yorke Landscape Board

155 Main North Road
CLARE SA 5453

Email: ny.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au
Phone: 08 8841 3444

www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny