

Khaki weed

Khaki weed (*Alternanthera pungens*) is a hardy pest plant with spiny burrs. It spreads easily on roadsides and through high foot traffic areas such as caravan parks and public picnic areas.



What does it look like?

Khaki weed is a creeping herb with a perennial woody taproot and annual above-ground growth.

Its stems are reddish with soft, silky hairs. They grow to 60cm and can develop roots where stem nodes touch the soil.

Leaves are numerous and grow in opposite pairs of unequal size up to 4cm. The oval-shaped leaves are green with red-purple veins. They have short stalks and are sparsely haired.

Flowers appear mainly in summer and autumn. They are very small and occur in clusters in the leaf axils. The flowers are surrounded by sharply-pointed, chaff-coloured bracts. The fruit is chaff-coloured and is a burr about 1cm long.

Seeds germinate in the spring but will also germinate in response to summer rain.

The taproot and stems develop over spring and summer, with all above-ground growth dying off in late summer. New growth is produced from the tap root in the following spring.

Khaki Weed	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Germination/ Present												
Active Growth/ Flowering												
Fruiting/ Seeding												
Optimal Treatment												

Where is it found?

Khaki weed is native to Central and South America. It is a priority weed in the Port Augusta-Quorn, Kingoonya and Marla-Oodnadatta districts and an alert weed in the North Flinders district.

It is a summer growing plant that prefers light soils, warm conditions and high soil moisture over spring and summer.

Infestations are most likely where vehicles, stock, fodder and camping equipment provide sources of contamination.

What is its impact?

Khaki weed is a problematic pest plant that competes well in established pastures and benefits from summer moisture.

The spiny burrs damage the feet and mouths of stock and degrade wool quality. The plant may be poisonous to stock, but it is rarely eaten.

It competes strongly with established lawns and the burrs cause injury to hands and feet. It is known to cause hay fever, asthma and dermatitis in some people.

What can you do?

A long-term control program is required to tackle Khaki weed because of the abundant and persistent seeds and the robust tap root.

Survey for plants throughout spring to late summer to control any germination in response to summer rain.

Hygiene practices

Good hygiene practices for the movement of stock, hay, seed, produce and machinery greatly reduce the possibility of new infestations.

Mechanical

Cultivation, hoeing or hand pulling can be effective if the crown and the taproot is

removed. Care is required to avoid fragmenting the tap root from which new plants can grow.

Chemical

Herbicides should be applied when the weeds are actively growing. Control treatments must be applied persistently, without missing a year, until the infestation is eradicated.

Consult the [PIRSA Weed Control Handbook for Declared Plants in South Australia](#) for control options and application rates, or contact the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board for your copy.

What are your responsibilities?

Khaki weed is declared 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 it on their property.

The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board can provide a free weed identification service and specific control advice for your property.

More information

Email: saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au

Phone: 08 8429 9666

www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal