

Don't let them get away!

Invasive weeds are most effectively controlled when they and their numbers are small – a little weed control work today will save many dollars and days of work in years to come. Now is the time to take action!

Control that weed!

Control methods for this weed may include a combination of selective grazing regimes, intensive cultivation, the selective application of herbicides and ongoing monitoring.

Intensive cultivation over a number of years can significantly reduce populations, providing that the soil is turned deeply enough to bring up the bulk of the root mass.

Selective grazing by sheep can be especially effective on permanent pasture. Remember: sheep will be need to be taken off white weed infested pasture if they are to be sold for meat due to the fact that it will taint their meat.

Herbicides can also play a key role in an integrated management approach to controlling white weed. **Always read and follow the label**, wear protective equipment, and avoid off-target damage during chemical control.

White weed is persistent and difficult to manage – control works will generally need to combine a number of these techniques, and be conducted over a number of years to completely eradicate this pest plant.

The best solution for your site will vary with the type and intensity of infestation – for advice and more details on control methods, consult the DPIPWE website (www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/weeds).

Do the right thing

Weed waste dumped in bushland or local reserves gives pest plants a leg-up into new areas. Do the right thing, and dispose of your weed waste responsibly.

White weed is easily spread within and between properties by machinery and people – check your clothes, shoes and vehicles for soil or plant matter that could be carrying weedy plant seeds or plant fragments. Machinery and other equipment used in areas of white weed infestation should be thoroughly cleaned prior to moving into new areas.

Get informed

White weed is a significant weed threat for Southern Tasmania. For more information contact your local Council office or call DPIPWE on 1300 368 550.



Also known as
Hoary cress

Impacts

Serious agricultural weed – reduces productivity through out-competing crops, can taint milk and meat of livestock that graze it

Current distribution in Southern Tasmania

Widespread: in Brighton

Localised infestations: in Southern Midlands, Central Highlands, Derwent Valley, Sorell and Clarence

Isolated infestations: in Kingborough



weed warning

white weed

Background

Native to lands from the Mediterranean through to central Asia, white weed (*Lepidium draba*) made its Australian debut in Hobart in 1882. It is thought to have arrived in the country as a contaminant of pasture or crop seeds, and was first noticed as a problem plant in Australia in wheat crops in the 1930s. It became swiftly apparent that it competed strongly with the wheat, and was readily spread by cultivation of the soil. This pattern of weedy behaviour was soon to be repeated across the southern half of Australia, and white weed is still expanding its range to new areas today.

Today, it is a significant weed of grain crops, pasture, horticultural enterprises including orchards and vineyards, as well as an invader of wasteland, roadsides and disturbed areas. It reduces yields by competing with other plants for water and soil nutrients, and the root system of white weed produces a chemical that retards the growth of cereal crops. Stock which graze this plant may have their meat and milk tainted by it, and it is thought that white weed may be responsible for some livestock deaths.

The success of white weed within Australia is largely due to its methods of reproduction. White weed grows a persistent and extensive network of roots, and if these are broken, through cultivation or other means, each fragment can sprout into a new plant. Such root fragments are easily spread on dirty machinery, and are the main method by which this weed is spread. White weed also produces large numbers of seeds, aiding spread into new areas.

White weed significantly decreases agricultural productivity, and is very time-consuming and expensive to remove once established. It is currently expanding its range within Southern Tasmania.

Get a positive ID

White weed is an upright perennial herb that grows up to 90cm tall. Seedlings generally appear in autumn, growing into rosettes over winter and spring. These rosettes have long, narrow leaves up to 20cm long, which have toothed edges and are covered in fine, downy white hairs. Upright stalks emerge from these rosettes in spring – they are solid, pithy and generally only begin branching towards their crown. Leaves borne on the stems are about 10cm long at the base, become progressively shorter further up the stem – the bases of upper leaves wrap slightly around the stem.

White weed is a member of the Brassicaceae, and bears the distinctive whitish/yellow cross shaped flowers seen on many plants in this family. Showy bunches of flowers begin to crowd together at the crown of the plants in October to November. Each flower bears four petals, and is approximately 4-8mm across. The flowers form heart-shaped fruits (about 3-5mm across), which are divided into two, inflated chambers. Each chamber contains 1-2 small, oval seeds which when mature, turn a reddish-brown, generally in early summer. White weed then goes into a period of dormancy until the following autumn.

There are a number of other species of *Lepidium* with which white weed may be confused. Unlike other *Lepidiums*, whose fruits are noticeably flattened, the fruits of white weed are noticeably rounded or inflated, and do not open to release seeds when they are mature.



Weed management – it's your responsibility

Many people unwittingly harbour pest plants in their gardens – some even actively grow them, knowing nothing of their weedy ways.

This plant is a declared weed under Tasmania's *Weed Management Act 1999*. It is your responsibility to control White weed on your land. Failure to remove it from your property could result in legal action. It is also illegal to distribute the plant or its seed in any way, whether as cut flowers, in contaminated feed, on livestock or on dirty equipment.

Weeds are a growing problem.

Act now – Make a plan and make a start!

Images:

1. Flowering plants
2. White weed leaves and stem
3. White weed seed