

Cape Tulip

(*Moraea flaccida* & *Moraea miniata*)

Declared Plant Requiring Management

Listed under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007

Why is it a problem?

Both one-leaf and two-leaf Cape tulips are serious weeds of pasture. Animals will selectively graze clovers and other more palatable species, and this allows Cape tulips to flourish. They contain toxic chemicals called glycosides which affect the heart.

Symptoms of poisoning in cattle include loss of appetite, abdominal pain, stiffness of the hind legs, diarrhoea, general depression, and weakness that may advance to convulsions or paralysis. Death may occur within hours of consuming the plant, or over several days.

Cattle are most commonly affected, and poisoning usually occurs when stock unaccustomed to the plant are placed on heavily infested pastures. About a kilogram of fresh leaf material is enough to cause death overnight.

Sheep are rarely affected, although they are susceptible to the toxins. Placing very hungry sheep on infested green or dry pasture may result in poisoning.

The plant remains toxic even when dry, so contaminated hay can also be a problem. There is no treatment readily available. Prevent poisoning by avoiding contact with the plants. Always seek veterinary advice when livestock show unusual symptoms and/or unexplained deaths occur.

Cape tulip can be difficult and expensive to eradicate. Some herbicides effective in controlling Cape tulip also damage pasture legumes. Research is continuing into economically viable means of control, including biological control.

How do we control it?

The dormancy associated with both Cape tulip species can lead to disappointment with control efforts. If a good kill is achieved in a year when many plants are dormant, there may be many more plants present the following season.

Ask your agribusiness consultant, local Biosecurity Officer or landcare coordinator for assistance in preparing a weed management plan.

Practice good biosecurity to avoid introducing Cape tulip to your property and to avoid poisoning livestock.

Further information on updated control methods can be found here:

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/declared-plants/cape-tulip-what-you-should-know>.

Where can landowners find more information?

For more information please visit the Department of Agriculture and Food's Website: <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/pests-weeds-diseases/weeds> or contact them direct on 1300 374 731.

Additionally, you can find more information on the Shire of Northam's website: www.northam.wa.gov.au or contact the Environmental Sustainability Officer on 9622 6100.

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What does it look like?

One-leaf Cape tulip (*Moraea flaccida*, previously *Homeria flaccida*)

Perennial herb to 70 centimetres high, distinguished by fibrous-sheathed corm at the base of the plant, orange to salmon pink flowers that are yellow in the centre; single leaves and presence of seeds in capsules. Corms one to four centimetres wide, developing new corms each year. Spread by seed and movement of corms. Often found in hay cut from infested paddocks.

Leaves

Leaf folded, ribbed, linear, to one metre long, extended and drooping above the flowers.

Flowers

Borne on branched stems, orange to salmon-pink, occasionally yellow. Flowers with six petals, each 2.6–4 centimetres long, not joined to each other. Flowers in spring when two or three years old.

Seeds

Angular red brown seeds, about two millimetres long, in narrow-cylindrical capsules 2.5–5 centimetres long, splitting from the apex into three parts.

Seeds germinate in autumn and plants regrow from corms at the same time. Poisonous to stock but generally avoided by them. Young stock may be affected if there is no alternative grazing available. One-leaf cape tulip is a serious pasture weed in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.



Two-leaf Cape tulip (*Moraea miniata* previously *Homeria miniata*)

Two-leaf Cape tulip is a perennial herb to 60 centimetres high.

Leaves

Two or three leaves, folded, ribbed, linear, to 80 centimetres long.

Flowers

Pink-salmon coloured flowers with a green dotted yellow centre on branched stems. Flowers with six petals, segments 1.3–2.5 centimetres long, not joined together. Flowers late winter and spring when two or three years old. Does not produce seeds, but does form a capsule to 1.5 centimetres long, which splits from the tips into three parts.

Corms

Corms are 1–2.5 centimetres wide, developing new corms each year. Plants produce clusters of cormils in the swollen leaf axils and many small corms (cormils) around the parent corm. Grows from corms and cormils in autumn. The corm and cormils have a hard black covering (tunic).

Spread by movement of corms and cormils caught in farm machinery and in agricultural produce. Poisonous to stock, but generally avoided by them. Cormil production may exceed many thousands per square metre, and may remain viable in the soil for many years. Less common than one-leaf cape tulip; the two species may grow together.

