

Narrow Leaf Cotton Bush

(*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*)

Declared Plant Requiring Management

Listed under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007

Why is it a problem?

Narrow-leaf cotton bush is a common weed in the south-west of Western Australia. It invades run down or low fertility pastures where it displaces useful species such as clover. Narrow-leaf cotton bush and its close relatives contain cardiac glycosides, which are toxic to humans and livestock. Stock wouldn't normally eat the plant because its acrid latex makes it extremely unpalatable but it may cause problems as a contaminant of hay or chaff. The main symptom of narrow-leaf cotton bush poisoning is severe gastroenteritis, which shows up as severe congestion of the alimentary canal. Narrow-leaf cotton bush also invades riparian areas where it competes with native plants.

What does it look like?

An erect slender short-lived shrub one to two metres high, with narrow opposite leaves, and bladder-like fruit. All parts of the plant exude a milky white sap when damaged. It reproduces by seed and suckers.

Stems

Pale green, 60-180 centimetres high, covered with short whitish downy hairs when young.

Leaves

Dull green, occasionally with shiny upper surface. They are 5-12 centimetres long, 6-18 millimetres wide tapering to a point and are opposite each other in pairs.

Flowers

White or creamy with five fringed waxy lobes turned sharply outwards. They are formed in a loose drooping cluster of three to ten flowers in the leaf axils.

Fruit

Distinctive seed pods that are puffy, swan-shaped structures up to six centimetres long and 2.5 centimetres wide and covered in soft spines up to one centimetres long.

Seeds

Contained within a thin walled sack that is separated from the outer wall by an air space. Brown coloured, flattened and egg shaped about six millimetres long and three millimetres wide with a tuft of silky hairs about three centimetres long at one end.



How do we control it?

Control methods for this declared plant can be found through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development; Agriculture and Food website: <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/herbicides/narrow-leaf-cotton-bush-control>. Disposal in the general waste bin is recommended.

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.