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OTHER COMMON NAMES: caltrop, tackweed, ground burnut, puncture weed, bullhead, goat's head, Mexican sandbur, Texas sandbur

DESCRIPTION

Puncturevine is a prostrate annual herb that grows from a simple woody taproot. It produces numerous green to reddish-brown stems that can grow up to six feet long. These stems have many branches that arise from the crown to produce a dense mat. The leaves are opposite with short, oblong petioles that are divided into four to eight **pinnate** leaflets and are covered in silky to bristly silver hairs. Small, yellow, five-petaled flowers are borne on short stalks at the leaf nodes. The fruit is a woody burr with sharp, rigid spines that are strong enough to puncture bike tires or shoe soles.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Woody burrs (fruits)
- Leaves with 4-8 opposite leaflets
- Silver hairs on the foliage

WHEN TO FIND PUNCTUREVINE

Puncturevine can be found from late spring through autumn, blooming from July through October.

WHERE TO FIND PUNCTUREVINE

This plant prefers warm conditions and light textured soils, but is highly adaptable to a range of growing conditions. It is commonly found in pastures, roadsides, orchards, vineyards, waste places, parks, railway yards, walk ways, and agricultural areas.

WHAT TO DO

Small populations of puncturevine can be hoed or pulled at the top of the tap root before or during flowering. If the seeds have begun to develop, remove the pulled material from the site.

Puncturevine

Tribulus terrestris

Puncturevine has become widespread in the United States since it was first introduced with livestock imported from the Mediterranean region. It is found throughout most of the U.S., except along the northern tier from Montana to New England, probably because it is intolerant to frost. In Oregon, puncturevine is present along the eastern and northeastern border and has the potential to invade most of the state. The success of this plant is due to its ability to thrive in hot and dry conditions where most other plants cannot.

Puncturevine reproduces entirely by seed, which require high temperatures for germination and growth. Seeds are dormant throughout the autumn and winter, germinating in late spring and early summer. Fruits are produced in late summer through autumn, and seeds are dispersed by animals, humans, and rubber-tired vehicles.

Puncturevine fruits (the burr) create a hazard to humans and animals, as they are very painful to step on and can easily puncture bike tires or the soles of light summer shoes. Two biocontrol agents, the seed weevil and the stem weevil, seem to be successful in controlling this hazardous weed. Repeated cultivation just after germination and some herbicides may also be effective.

REFERENCES

Puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris* L.). Retrieved March 20, 2007, from http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed_info/Tribulus_terrestris.html

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The painful burr!



Images courtesy of Weed Science Society of America

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