



Government
of South Australia

WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

SOLDIER THISTLE



Rosette of soldier thistle in autumn



Whole plant at flowering time



Flower head



Seedling

SOLDIER THISTLE



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Soldier thistle, *Picnomon acarna*, is an annual thistle introduced from the Mediterranean. Although it is easily controlled, it is important to keep soldier thistle off clean properties or to recognise and destroy new infestations before they become established.

Distribution

Eyre Peninsula	- isolated plants
Northern pastoral	- uncommon, found along some roadsides
Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula	- common in the southern areas of the region
Murray Mallee	- widespread
South East	- scattered infestations in the north
Central region	- scattered in the cereal growing areas

Impacts

Well established infestations of soldier thistle can compete with crops and choke harvesting equipment. The sharp spines injure animals and are avoided, thus reducing available grazing area.

Recognition

Soldier thistle is an erect plant to 1m high. Leaves and stems are covered with fine white hairs and yellow spines 1-1.5cm long. Stems are densely leafy and branched. Flower heads are pink or purple, 2-4cm long and can be solitary or in groups at the end of branches. The seeds are 4-6mm long, smooth and shiny with a detachable parachute of bristles on one end.

Ecology/Biology

Seeds that germinate after autumn rains develop into large rosettes during winter. Rosettes produce erect stems by late spring; late germinating seedlings may produce erect stems straight with hardly any rosette leaves. Flowering occurs over summer and the plants die by autumn.

Wind is the main method of dispersal; seeds can be blown short distances, and whole plants can also be blown around after breaking off at the base. Seeds can also be carried on animals, vehicles and in water.

Further Information:

Parsons, W.T., Cuthbertson, E.G. (1992). *Noxious Weeds of Australia*. Inkata Press.

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For more advice on recognising and controlling soldier thistle, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board :