



Government  
of South Australia

# WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

## ONE-LEAF CAPE TULIP



*Closeup of flower*



*Plant in flower with seed capsules forming*



*A dense infestation in pasture*

# ONE-LEAF CAPE TULIP



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One-leaf Cape tulip, *Moraea flaccida*, is a perennial weed introduced from South Africa. This plant is a garden escapee which has now become a significant weed throughout southern Australia. One-leaf Cape tulip is difficult to control chemically due to the dormancy of corms below the ground. It is therefore important to keep one-leaf Cape tulip off clean properties or to recognise and destroy new infestations before they become established.

## Distribution

Eyre Peninsula	- isolated outbreaks and very light infestations
Northern pastoral	- not present
Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula	- widespread in the south, isolated in the north
Murray Mallee	- isolated outbreaks in the southern mallee
South East	- scattered infestations
Central region	- large contained infestations

## Impacts

All parts of one-leaf Cape tulip are toxic to all types of grazing animals. The poison is a glycoside which causes loss of appetite, weakness and depression, blindness, dysentery, scouring and paralysis of the hind legs. Death usually occurs within 3 days and treatment is charcoal or kaolin to absorb the poison. Stock accustomed to grazing on infestations are not affected as they know not to eat the plants. This results in desirable pasture species being replaced by one-leaf Cape tulip by selective grazing which further decreases stock capacity.

## Recognition

One-leaf Cape tulip is a perennial herb with annual leaves and flowers to 60cm high. Each plant has only one leaf which is flat, 1-2cm wide and up to 1m long. Flowers are 3-5cm in diameter with six petals that can vary from salmon-pink through orange to yellow in colour. The fruit is a three-valved capsule up to 5cm long which starts green and turns brown when mature. Seeds are brown in colour, irregular in shape and discharged from the summit of the capsule. Each capsule may contain up to 150 seeds. Corms are 1-2cm in diameter, white in colour but covered in a brown fibrous tunic. Roots are fine, shallow and fibrous.

## Ecology/Biology

One-leaf Cape tulip occurs on a range of soil types and prefers sunny locations. It is the most common Cape tulip in Australia.

Seeds and corms germinate after the autumn rains and new corms already begin to form. Flowering stems are produced in winter and flowers appear in September. The aerial growth dies by November.

Plants of one-leaf Cape tulip do not flower or set seed until they are 2-3 years old. Corms move deeper into the soil by way of a contractile root whose action of drying drags the corm to about 10cm deep. Corms have a period of dormancy which determines the number of plants to germinate in any one year depending on seasonal conditions. Up to 60% of corms may remain dormant through a whole growing season.

Originally grown as a garden plant. It is now spread in contaminated soil, produce, farm machinery and stock. Seed capsules are also moved by wind and 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 one-leaf Cape tulip, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board :**