

# NEWS RELEASE – WEED OF THE WEEK SERIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## One of Region's Highest Priority Weeds Basking in Sunshine

***The unseasonably high temperatures this summer combined with the extended periods of moisture in the spring have resulted in another banner year for weeds. Throughout the summer, a 'Weed of the Week' series will inform readers about some of our most invasive and troublesome non-native plants and advise on the best options for control. Please let me know if there is a particular weed that you would like highlighted.***

It seemed appropriate to begin the series with an invader that thrives during heat waves. Efforts are currently underway in the Okanagan-Similkameen region to thwart the spread of puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*), one of the region's highest priority species. This invasive plant has already impacted our region's tourism industry by invading the beaches in Osoyoos, and more recently it's having an economic impact on our agricultural industry as it moves into ground crops and vineyards.

Puncturevine is a summer annual that occupies territories on every continent, excluding Antarctica. Throughout the world it is known by many names, including caltrop, goathead, Texas sandbur and ground bur-nut. The first North America introduction occurred in the early 1900s spreading throughout the Americas, particularly in the western United States. In Canada, puncturevine is known to occur only in the Okanagan and lower Similkameen valleys. It is most prolific in the sandy soils around Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos, with isolated patches in the Penticton area and one patch in Kelowna. Within the boundaries of the Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District, puncturevine is classified as a regionally noxious plant and therefore must be controlled under the provincial *Weed Control Act*.

Puncturevine forms dense mats along road shoulders, vacant lots, beaches and unpaved parking sites, its stems reaching up to 10 feet (3 metres) in length. This annual is also making its way into agricultural lands, where it grows between rows of ground crops such as strawberries or competes with newly planted grape vines. The stems are covered by hairy leaves that are divided into six to eight leaflets. Tiny, yellow flowers first appear in late spring or early summer, and spiny seedpods emerge a few weeks later. Each seedpod consists of 5 sections that, at maturity, break into tack-like structures with sharp spines for which this weed is aptly named. These sharply pointed seedpods stick painfully in bare feet and flatten bicycle tires, reducing the recreational potential of many areas. Even light truck tires can be punctured by the seedpods. Flowering and seed production typically occurs from mid-June to October.

In some western US states, puncturevine is controlled by the stem weevil (*Microlarinus lypriformis*) and seed weevil (*M. lareynii*), introduced from Italy as biocontrol agents in the 1960s. However, a release of the seed weevil in Osoyoos in 1986 proved unsuccessful, likely due to the insect perishing during the winter months. Efforts are currently underway to reinvestigate this bioagent and determine if another attempt should be made to establish this weevil in BC.

Landowners are encouraged to learn to identify the plant and know how to control it. The best method of controlling puncturevine is to prevent establishment by destroying the first plants found in an area before seeds begin to form. Young puncturevine plants are easily controlled by hoeing, shallow tillage or by carefully hand-pulling plants. If seeds have not yet developed or are immature (green), the plants can be composted. Chemical treatment can also be effective when plants are young and actively growing. If plants have already matured and the seeds have ripened (turned brown and easily fall off the plants), plants should be carefully pulled and bagged, then taken to the local landfill. Tipping fees are waived for invasive plant disposal at all landfills operated by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen.

Like most other weeds, puncturevine prefers areas of disturbed, bare ground. Landowners can help by not providing an opportunity for weeds to grow, as well as by patrolling their properties in the summer and controlling any puncturevine they discover. Areas of soil disturbance should be reduced and re-seeded immediately with a suitable dryland seed mix.

**For more information on puncturevine or other harmful invasive plants, contact Lisa Scott, Weed Coordinator for the Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District at (250) 492-0237 or email [info@rdos.bc.ca](mailto:info@rdos.bc.ca)**