

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,
but may have limited distribution in some counties

Puncturevine
Tribulus terrestris

Other common names: Goat's head, bullhead,
Mexican sandbur, Texas sandbur

USDA symbol: TRTE
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Native of the Mediterranean region. Puncturevine was first documented in the Pacific Northwest in 1924 and is suspected to have been a contaminant in wool from Europe. The heavily armored seeds comprise a nuisance in gravel parking lots, along roadways, in irrigated vegetable crops and especially at county fair locations where livestock introduce the seeds attached to their hooves.

Distribution in Oregon: Puncturevine is widely distributed in eastern, southeastern and central Oregon and is increasing in many counties in the Willamette Valley.

Description: Puncturevine is a warm-season annual growing completely prostrate to the ground. Single plants form dense mats four to six feet across. Leaves are opposite, hairy, divided into 4 to 8 pairs of leaflets, each about 1/2 inch long. Flowers are small, yellow, 1/2 inch wide with five petals, borne in the leaf axil. Fruits, consist of a woody bur divided into 5 sections, breaking apart when mature into tack-like structures sporting sharp, rigid spines. A single plant can produce around 400 fruit each containing two or three seeds.

Impacts: Puncturevine infests the edges of fields, ditches, and roadsides where it forms dense mats. Animals, humans, and vehicles easily spread the heavily spined seeds. Puncturevine seeds are very painful to step on and easily puncture bicycle tires or light summer footwear. Even though it is not readily grazed, it is toxic to animals. If growing in orchards or vineyards, it is a problem to the fruit packers. Puncturevine is tolerant of drought conditions and survives well in sandy or gravelly soils.

Biological controls: Two biocontrol agents, a seed weevil and a stem weevil, are established in Oregon.

