Harrisia *(Harrisia spp.)*

Weed management guide

Weed type
Cacti

February 2023

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west

In NSW, weeds are regulated by the NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015. All land managers have a General Biosecurity Duty to contain the spread of weeds.

"General Biosecurity Duty means that any person dealing with plant matter must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable)."

The Regional priority for Harrisia is Eradication. In order to achieve this, Land Managers are asked to: *Mitigate the risk of new weeds being introduced to their land. The plant should be eradicated from the land and the land kept free of the plant. The plant should not be bought, sold, grown, carried or released into the environment.*

For further information, contact your local Biosecurity (Weeds) Officer via Central West Local Land Services or visit NSW WeedWise.

NSW WeedWise

Habit and description

Harrisia is a genus of cacti that form tangled mats up to 0.6 m high. Its stems are slender, branched, jointed every 30-45 cm and can grow up to 4-5 cm thick. The flowers are white and funnel-shaped with a green base, opening at night and withering the following morning. The fruits are red with white flesh and black seeds. There are three species present in the state: *Harrisia martinii*, *H. tortuosa*, and *H. pomanensis* and are differentiated mainly by their spines and fruits.

H. martinii has a central spine 2-3.5 cm long surrounded by 1-3 spines 1.0-1.5 cm long as well as a row of spines. Fruits are warty with spines up to 5 mm long. *H. tortuosa* has a central spine 3-5 cm long, surrounded by 4-8 spines 1-3 cm long. Fruits are not warty but have a few spines. *H. pormanensis* has 1-3 larger spines 1-2 cm long and 6-8 spines up to 1cm long held close to the stem. Fruits do not have spines.

Harrisia prefers growing on fertile clay soils and is closely associated with brigalow scrubs.

Photo: © Bob Trounce | NSW DPI

Photo: © John Hosking | NSW DPI

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Reproduction and spread

Harrisia can spread by fruits or by vegetative parts. Its fruits are generally spread by animals but primarily by birds. Harrisia can reach reproductive maturity at 6 months, producing seed for the remainder of the year. Seeds usually germinate after the first heavy rains of summer.

Tubers of Harrisia are spread by wild pigs while the stem fragments can stick to animals, vehicles, machinery, and humans.

Impacts

Agriculture

- It forms dense thickets and combined with its spines create an impenetrable wall which disrupt movement of livestock.
- Harrisia can also take over grazing lands by out competing pasture grasses.
- It can cause injury to livestock and a particular concern for sheep is it can devalue wool and prevent shearing.

Native vegetation

- In brigalow scrubs, it can completely cover the ground surface, pushing out other native understory vegetation.

Management

Chemical

- Herbicide can be sprayed over actively growing plants making sure to cover all plant parts. Follow-up may be needed especially against large clumps of Harrisia.
- Seek the guidance of an experienced Weeds Officer for expert advice on herbicide use.
- Visit www.apvma.gov.au for a list of registered products, product labels and permit requirements.
- NSW DPI (2018) provides a list of recommended herbicides for the control of Harrisia at https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/HarrisiaCactus

Non-chemical

- Physical removal using tools can be used for small infestations and single plants but complete removal including the tubers must be ensured to prevent re-growth.
- Waste must be disposed either by burying at least 1 m deep or by burning in a hot fire.
- There may also be designated sites for disposal, contact your local council for advice .
- Fire can also be used against small infestations, but high level of heat is required to destroy the underground parts.

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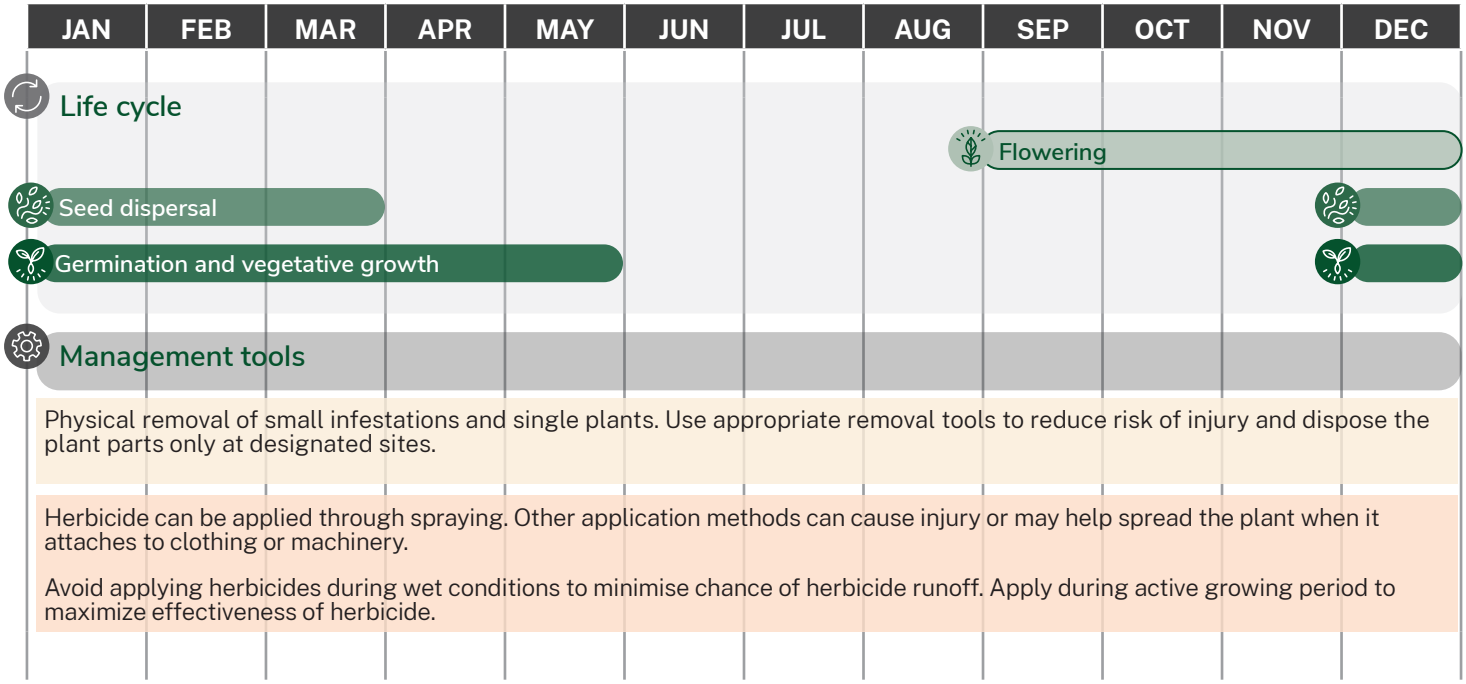
Management calendar



Optimal control options may vary depending on your location and climate. Consult an experienced Weeds Officer based in your local government area for control methods suited to your conditions.

All herbicides must be used in accordance with the herbicide label and permit requirements.

Further information

For more information on your general biosecurity duties, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity.

For the best guidance on how to meet this duty on your property, contact your expert Weeds Officer at your local council or via Local Land Services www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west.

NSW WeedWise

References

NSW DPI. (2018). *NSW WeedWise*. https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/HarrisiaCactus

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