

Castor Oil Plant

What is it?

Castor Oil is a native of Asia and Africa, but is now common to many countries of the world. It can be found along the banks of rivers and creeks, and in disturbed sites.

A Castor Oil plant contains one of the most toxic poisons in the plant world. It is toxic to humans as well as animals with all parts of the plant poisonous. Under normal conditions animals do not graze it, but accidental poisoning can occur by animals ingesting seeds while grazing around the plant. Young children can also be at risk as the seed pods are an oddity. As the pods ripen, they split open and the colorful seed is partly displayed. It is estimated that a small child would only need to ingest one seed to obtain a fatal dose.

What does it look like?

It is a perennial summer growing plant that can reach 4 to 5 metres in height. Branches are stout, hollow and a dull pale green in colour. Flowers are formed in stout erect spikes. Fruit is about 2.5 cm in diameter and spiky. Seed capsule is divided into three lobes and each lobe contains a seed. Leaves are divided into 7-9 serrated lobes.

Control Measures

Physical control:
Due to the large tap root hand pulling can be difficult even for small plants.

Castor Oil Plant

Ricinus communis

Not a declared Noxious plant under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993.



Herbicide control:

There are several herbicides registered for the control of Castor Oil. They include *Ester 80*, *Banvel M* and *Tordon 75* (check with your pesticide supplier for current registration). As with all treatment, it should be done before plants start to produce seed, and before they get too tall.

Note: in some cases the application of herbicides to a toxic plant can make it more palatable to animals. Stock should be removed from the area before treatment.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (January 2004). Users are reminded of the need to ensure that any product purchased for the control of Castor Oil is registered for that purpose. The author cannot take responsibility for any changes, or modifications, that are made to product registration or requirements that may occur after January 2004.

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