

# HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?



NSW Agriculture

## Weed Alert

### Kochia

(*Kochia scoparia*)

Also known as *Bassia scoparia*

Other common names are burning bush, summer cypress, mock cypress.



Leaves are flat, alternate and 50 mm long.

### Watch out for Kochia – a potential weed of New South Wales.

#### ■ WORLD STATUS

*Kochia* is native to eastern Europe and western Asia. It has become naturalised throughout Europe and parts of temperate Asia. It is recorded as a weed in Argentina, Canada and the United States.

It was initially grown as an ornamental hedge around gardens, or used as a backdrop planting because of its dense conical shape and attractive colour in autumn. It has since escaped cultivation and today it is one of the most widespread and troublesome weeds of US agriculture.

It was introduced to Western Australia in 1990 as a fodder plant for salt-affected land, but has since escaped cultivation and is now subject to an eradication program.

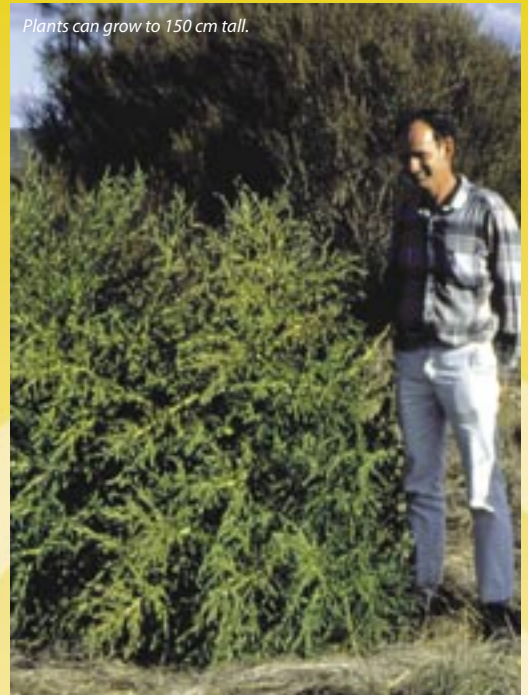
*Kochia* is declared noxious throughout NSW as a W1 weed and must be continuously suppressed and destroyed. [Summer or mock cypress (*Kochia scoparia* subsp. *Tricophylla*) is exempt from declaration]

*Kochia* appeared in Tasmania as a contaminant of carrot seed in 1995, 1997 and 1998. All infestations have been eradicated and previously infested areas are checked annually.

#### ■ QUARANTINE

The importation of *kochia* into Australia is prohibited under Australian quarantine regulations.

Plants can grow to 150 cm tall.



#### ■ THE PROBLEM

*Kochia* is able to grow in a wide range of soil types, is drought tolerant, resistant to insect attack, toxic to livestock and able to rapidly spread long distances. It produces allelopathic compounds that inhibit the growth of nearby plants.

It has the potential in Australia to infest pastures, crops, roadsides, railway lines and amenity areas. Once the plant gets into paddocks, it will significantly reduce pasture and crop production.

Dead plants break off at ground level and are blown large distances by the wind. This 'tumbleweed' mechanism is capable of spreading seeds up to a kilometre from the original plant site.

Visit our website: [www.agric.nsw.gov.au/weeds](http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/weeds)



NSW Agriculture

FOR MORE  
INFORMATION:

Contact your local  
council weeds officer  
or district agronomist,  
or telephone the  
NSW Agriculture Hotline  
on 1800 680 244.

## ■ IDENTIFICATION

**Habit** - Kochia is an erect annual, growing 20–150 cm tall. It usually has a main stem that bears many upwardly-curving branches, that give the plant a dense, compact appearance.

**Leaves** - The leaves are flat and alternate, up to 50 mm long and 8 mm wide, with three longitudinal veins on the underside. Leaves are usually without petioles (leaf stems) and often have hairy margins. The young shoots are usually hairy.

**Flowers** - Flowers are small and indistinct, located towards the tips of the branches.

**Colour** - As the plant ages, its colour often changes from green to pale yellow, pink and then 'rusty' brown.

**Fruit** - The fruit is small (2 mm across), star shaped and contains a single seed.

## ■ PROPAGATION

Kochia reproduces by seed only. The species typically produces around 14,600 seeds per plant in late summer. Seeds are dispersed in autumn when the plant becomes a 'tumbleweed'. Seeds mostly germinate in spring or as suitable conditions allow.

Seeds appear to have a relatively short life in the soil.

## ■ CONTROL

There is no registered herbicide in NSW for the control of kochia.

Early tillage in spring gives good control of the kochia seedlings. Mowing or slashing the plants before flowering is effective in reducing seed production but will not kill the plant.

Seedlings are susceptible to strong plant competition.

There are currently no known biological control agents.

*Jeff Burton*

*Extension Officer (Weeds)*

*NSW Agriculture  
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### **Sources of information**

*Department of Agriculture Western Australia web site.  
[www.agric.wa.gov.au](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au)*

*Photographs: Agriculture WA*

*Department of Primary Industries Water and the  
Environment web site, Tasmania. [www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au)*

*Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board web site.  
[www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard](http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard)*

## Watch out and report Kochia:

Kochia can spread quickly if allowed to seed. If you find this weed in your area or see plants that may be kochia, contact your Council Weeds Officer or NSW Agriculture immediately.

*Kochia plants turn yellow-brown as they mature.*



*A young growing tip of Kochia scoparia*



*Kochia is very invasive. The dark green plants of Kochia have grown from seed dispersed by the tumble weed habit of mature plants.*

