

Prickly acacia

Vachellia nilotica

PROHIBITED MATTER IN NSW

Prickly acacia is a native tree of the tropics and subtropics. It is found in Ethiopia, Somalia, Pakistan, India and Burma. In Australia, Prickly acacia was planted in the early 1900s as a shade and ornamental tree in the Bowen and Rockhampton districts of Queensland.

In 1926 it was recommended to provide shade and fodder for sheep in western Queensland. The introduction of cattle into western Queensland, and good wet seasons during the 1950s and 1970s, saw this thorny tree invade vast areas of the Mitchell Grass Downs of central and western Queensland.



Distribution

Scattered infestations have been found along the Queensland coast, in the Northern Territory, northeastern South Australia and the southeastern Kimberley Ranges in Western Australia.

Prickly acacia is not currently known to be present in NSW, but has the potential to invade subtropical and grassland regions.

Description

Prickly acacia is a spreading tree (4-5m tall, sometimes reaching heights of 10m), usually with a single-stemmed trunk that has several branches near the soil surface and a deep tap root. Young trees have bark tinged with orange and/or green. Mature trees have dark, rough bark and less thorny stems. Young stems have paired spines (1-5cm long) at the base of each group of leaves.

Leaves are 30-40cm long, green and fern-like. Each leaf is made up of 10-25 pairs of very small (3-6mm) leaflets.

Seed pods are flat, 10-20cm long, grey-green and covered in fine hairs. Mature pods darken to green or brown and have deep, irregular constrictions between each seed (8-10 seeds per pod). Seeds have a very hard brown seed coat.

Flowers are bright yellow and wattle-like. Spherical flower heads (1-1.2cm diameter) occur on 2cm-long stems. Groups of 2-6 flower heads are found at the base of each leaf joint.

Habitat

Prickly acacia grows best in areas that have cracking clay soil with high water holding capacity, however it can also grow in sandy soils when water is abundant and is commonly found on waterways and seasonal floodplains (350-1,500mm per annum).

Reproduction and dispersal

This plant reproduces by seed (175,000 seeds per medium-sized tree each year), and pods and seeds can be moved in fast-flowing water. Cattle can transport the seeds long distances. Stock, particularly cattle, from affected areas of Queensland brought into NSW should be held in a quarantine area before and after transportation (for at least 7 days). Quarantine areas need to be checked for Prickly acacia seedlings for seven years.



Prickly acacia *Vachellia nilotica*



(Photo source: Dept Agriculture & Fisheries QLD WeedWise.)

Declaration

Regional priority weed objective: Prevention

These weeds are not currently found in the state, or are present in small numbers, pose significant biosecurity risk and prevention is a reasonably practical objective.

Control

If you have seen, or think you have seen, Prickly acacia please contact Rous County Council on (02) 6623 3800 for a positive identification and advice on control.

Mechanical and chemical treatments may be used but ongoing and repeated treatments must be applied.

To achieve eradication, any treatments and monitoring should be conducted in association with Council.



(Photo sources: Kim Curtis.)

For further information contact:

Rous County Council
02 6623 3800

www.rous.nsw.gov.au

These information sheets were originally prepared by Rous County Council © 2019

All information provided is done so in good faith, but on the basis that Rous County Council and its consultants are not liable for any damage or loss that may occur in relation to this information.

