

Invasive plants and animals

Common sensitive plant

Mimosa pudica



Description

Common sensitive plant (*Mimosa pudica*) is a low, sprawling, perennial plant which usually grows about 15–45 cm high. Its round, often woody stems are reddish brown or purple and have short, curved prickles.

Leaves are dark green, feathery, fern-like and divided into one or more pairs of segments near the end of the leaf stalk. Each segment is divided into 10–25 pairs of leaflets. These small leaflets close up when disturbed or injured.

Flowers are pale pink or purplish pink in fluffy balls, about 1 cm across. They are on short stalks in leaf forks and develop into clusters of seed pods.

Seed pods 2–3 cm long with stiff bristles along edges and one to five seeds. Pods eventually break up into one-seeded pieces. Seeds are flattened, small and 3 mm in diameter.

Habitat and distribution

Common sensitive plant is a native of tropical America, introduced into Australia as a curiosity plant in gardens. It has since escaped and is now found all along the Queensland coast, mainly in the wetter areas of the tropical north.

Common sensitive plant is a weed of disturbed and cultivated areas, such as roadsides, vacant allotments, heavily grazed pastures, crops and lawns. It grows on a wide variety of soils, and can stand considerable shading. This plant is spread mainly by seeds clinging to man and animals. Seeds can remain viable for many years.

The problem

Common sensitive plant competes with many tropical crops. It is especially troublesome in areas where hand-weeding is practised, as its thorns can cause painful wounds.

The plant can also be a pest in tropical pastures where high plant populations and the sharp prickles restrict grazing.

Control

In pasture situations, dicamba and fluroxypyr can be used to control common sensitive plant (see table below).

Thorough wetting of all leaf surfaces is essential. If plants are disturbed before spraying, the leaves will fold up and the herbicide will be ineffective.

Ensure all spraying is done with forward booms or ahead of operators with knapsack sprayers.

Further information

Further information is available from the vegetation management/weed control/environmental staff at your local government.



TABLE 1 – HERBICIDES REGISTERED FOR THE CONTROL OF COMMON SENSITIVE PLANT

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Comments
Sugar cane	Dicamba/Banvel 200 ¹	1.4 L/ha	Boomspray using 100-150 L water/ha or helicopter using 45 L water/ha
Between cropping applications (conservation tillage)	Dicamba/Banvel 200 ¹	0.8-1.4 L/ha	Apply to seedlings. Use high rates on larger weeds
Pastures	Fluroxypyr/Starane 200	1.5 L/ha	Do not disturb plants before spraying. Legumes present at time of spraying will be killed.

¹Banvel 200 is also registered for many other weeds in pastures and non-crop situations. Refer to label for appropriate rates. If treating other weeds in pastures with Banvel 200 common sensitive plant may also be controlled.