

# Telegraph weed

*Heterotheca grandiflora*



Telegraph weed, also known as ‘sticky daisy’, is a short-lived perennial that is well adapted to survival in sandy soils. It has invaded disturbed and open coastal sand dunes, forming dense infestations where it can replace native vegetation.

Telegraph weed is a common weed throughout Hawaii and was first found in Australia in central New South Wales. It was first recorded in Queensland on the Gold Coast in the early 1990s. Control programs have been undertaken on South Stradbroke Island and at The Spit on the Gold Coast.

## Legal requirements

Telegraph weed is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. It must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment. The Act requires everyone to take all reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants under their control. This is called a general biosecurity obligation (GBO). This fact sheet gives examples of how you can meet your GBO.

At a local level, each local government must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants in its area. This plan may include actions to be taken on telegraph weed. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.



**Queensland  
Government**

## Description

Telegraph weed is an erect, flowering invasive plant, generally growing 50–100 cm high but sometimes up to 2 m high. The daisy-like flowers are yellow, small, 15–22 mm wide and at the tips of the branches. Around the edge of each flower head are 25–35 small ‘petals’, 4–8 mm long. Each flower head produces many seeds, 2–5 mm long. Seeds are topped with a ring of several yellowish-brown to reddish coloured hairs.

Leaves are oval to oblong in shape, irregularly and coarsely toothed, 2–8 cm long, 1–3.5 cm wide, arranged alternately and tapering at the base. Leaves emit a characteristic odour when crushed. Stems are upright, thick, and covered in fine, white sticky hairs, giving them a slightly dull green, lustrous appearance.

## Life cycle

After flowering in the summer one year, the plant dies back to the base, re-sprouts and flowers again the following spring. It most commonly flowers in late summer but it has also been known to flower throughout the year. In Queensland, peak seed production, which is its only form of reproduction, appears to be in late summer and autumn.

## Methods of spread

Telegraph weed seeds are spread by wind and water. It can also be spread by animals, footwear, clothes and beach towels. The hairs on these small seeds are readily carried 5–10 m in a light breeze and further in a strong wind.

It is believed that telegraph weed was accidentally introduced to the Southport Spit in the late 1980s via machinery and has since spread to adjoining areas due to seed being carried in the prevailing south-easterly winds.

## Habitat and distribution

Native to northern Mexico and south-western USA, telegraph weed prefers open, disturbed sites with dry, sandy soils. In Queensland, infestations occur at Paradise Point, Labrador and the Spit on the Gold Coast, South Stradbroke Island and Wavebreak Island.

**Table 1. Herbicides for the control of telegraph weed**

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Comments
Agricultural non-crop land, bushland, native vegetation, conservation areas, coastal and adjacent areas	2,4-D amine 625 g/L	3 mL per 1 L water	Spray to thoroughly wet all foliage. Minimise contact with desirable plants Follow up control work every four to six months is necessary to prevent newly established plants from flowering APVMA permit PER11463 (expires 30/04/2027)

**Read the label carefully before use. Always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.**

## Control

### Managing telegraph weed

The GBO requires a person to take reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks posed by telegraph weed. This fact sheet provides information and some options for controlling telegraph weed.

### Mechanical control

Hand-pull seedlings and plants up to 1 m high. Telegraph weed has a shallow root system with a distinct taproot, which makes pulling the bushes a practical treatment. The deep tap root on the seedlings is quite distinctive but becomes hidden by fibrous roots as the plant matures.

The removal of adult plants stimulates seed germination and these seedlings must be removed before they produce further seeds.

### Biological control

There are no known biological control agents for the control of telegraph weed.

### Herbicide control

Herbicides are an effective control method for telegraph weed. After spraying, ensure follow-up after four months and re-treat as required.

There is no herbicide products specifically registered for the control of telegraph weed in Queensland; however, a permit allows people generally to use some herbicide products to control telegraph weed as an environmental weed in various situations.

Prior to using the herbicides listed under PER11463, you must read or have read to you and understand the conditions of the permit. To obtain a copy of this permit, visit [apvma.gov.au](http://apvma.gov.au). See Table 1 for the treatment options in situations allowed by the permit.

### More information

For more information contact your local government or visit [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au).





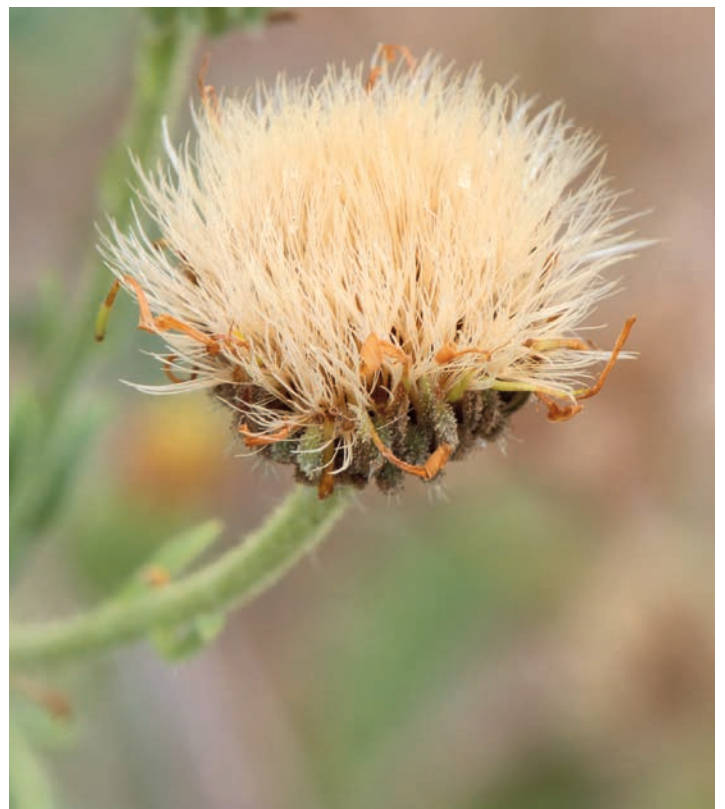
Telegraph weed seed head dispersed by wind



Telegraph weed seedling root







Fact sheets are available from [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au). The control methods recommended should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, the department does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

