



A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO CAMELTHORN

Description

Camelthorn (*Alhagi pseudalhagi*) is a perennial desert shrub introduced into the United States from western Asia and Mediterranean areas. Initial infestations were first documented in California and have now spread to many of the western states. Camelthorn is listed as a noxious weed in many states, including Arizona. A noxious weed is one that is non-native to the eco-system and has invasive characteristics.

Habitat

Camelthorn has the ability to thrive in very adverse conditions. While its primary habitat is deep, moist soils, Camelthorn can also be found in dry, rocky, and saline soils. The plant is especially abundant along riverbanks, canals, and irrigation ditches but also occurs in roadside drainage areas and can spread into cultivated fields.

Morphology

Plants are generally 1 1/2 to 4 feet tall. The greenish stems are marked with parallel lines or ridges and are smooth without hairs. Single leaves are alternate, wedge-shaped and hairless on the upper surface, with hairs on the underside. Camelthorn flowers are small, pea-like, and are pinkish purple to maroon in color. Flowers can be found on spine tipped branches on the upper portions on the plant. Seedpods are reddish-brown in color and are curved upward with deep indentations. The seeds are clearly outlined in the seedpod.

Camelthorn has an extensive, woody root system. Roots often reach depths of 5 to 6 feet. Rhizomes at this depth will sprout new shoots. These new shoots in turn produce rhizomes that spread equally as far. Rate of spread can reach 30 feet per year.

Potential Damage

Camelthorn infestations are a serious risk to private landowners. Thorns from the plant can inhibit recreational activity and can be injurious to humans

and livestock. Camelthorn will grow through materials impenetrable to other plant species, such as pavement, concrete, and foundations of homes. Camelthorn also out-competes native vegetation and landscape plants.

Control

Control measures should be initiated as quickly as possible when Camelthorn is identified. This is done to contain the infestation to as small an area as possible for treatment.

Like other deep-rooted perennials, mechanical control of Camelthorn is difficult. Digging and uprooting is not effective unless done frequently over a period of years. This is difficult if the infestation is significantly large. The deep roots are broken and severed and will produce new vegetative growth. Also, bio-control measures are not an option as there are no known effective methods at this time.

Chemical control is the most effective means of control. The most effective and available herbicides are glyphosate products (Roundup® etc.) and can be found at local garden centers. Applications are most effective when made in the spring or fall. It is important to follow label directions for application methods and rates. Contact your local Cooperative Extension office for questions regarding treatment.

1/2005

AZ1350

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES
TUCSON, ARIZONA 85721

ERIC NORTON

Area Assistant Agent, Agriculture, La Paz County

This information has been reviewed by university faculty.
cals.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/az1350.pdf



Figure 1. Thorny branch



Figure 2. Mature plant



Figure 3. Root system



Figure 4. Flower and seedpod

Any products, services, or organizations that are mentioned, shown, or indirectly implied in this publication do not imply endorsement by The University of Arizona.