

Trianthema portulacastrum

Recognize the problem

Family: Aizoaceae (ice plant family).

Common names: Desert horse purslane, black pigweed, giant pigweed, horse purslane.

Burmese: Laik-yin-but.

Annual prostrate, clump or mat forming fleshy herb (up to about 60 cm tall) with green or reddish-purple stems, 10-40 cm long, much branched; hairless, except for small lines of hairs near the leaves.

Leaves: Green or reddish-green, shiny, small, succulent, round to oval (1.2-3.5 cm long and 0.8-2.2 cm wide) with slightly wavy margins; held opposite each other with one leaf smaller than the other; short leaf stalks (3-10 mm long) expanded at their bases.

Flowers: White, pink to pinkish-purple, solitary, very small (about 7 mm across); only opening in the morning.

Fruits: Capsule (dry fruit that opens at maturity); curved, cylindrical (5 mm long and 3-4 mm across) with two erect, pointed "wings" or awns on top, where the capsule opens releasing 6-8 seeds.

Seeds: Kidney-shaped, reddish-brown to black seeds (1.3 mm wide).

Background

Origin: Uncertain, but possibly tropical America.

Introduction: Probably accidentally as a contaminant, but utilized as a herbal medicine and for its edible leaves.

Habitat: Widespread in a wide variety of habitat-types in Africa, Asia and North and South America.

Spread: By seeds, spread by wind, water, soil, animals, man, machinery, vehicles and as contaminant of crop and pasture seed and fodder.

Invades: Roadsides, disturbed areas, wastelands, gardens, fallow lands and croplands, especially those under irrigation, and dry river beds.

Impacts: *Trianthema portulacastrum* is a serious weed in many crop production systems. In India it is a serious noxious weed reducing yields in crops such as cotton, mustard, maize, pearl millet, sugarcane, pigeon pea, mung bean, soybean, potato and onions. In the rainy season, infestations in cotton, maize and rice can reduce crop yields by 32-60%. In India horse purslane can reduce the yield of mung bean by 50-60% if left untreated. It is also a host plant for the beet leafhopper (*Circulifer tenellus*), the red hairy caterpillar (*Amsacta moorei*), *Rhizoctonia solani* and the chilli mosaic virus. The plant is used as fodder, but may cause poisoning in cattle.

Scientific name(s) > *Trianthema portulacastrum*

Flowering stem of *Trianthema portulacastrum*. (Photo by J.M. DiTomaso/ Bugwood.org)



Desert horse purslane habit. (Photo by F. Starr & K. Starr/ flickr.com)



The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



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