

Puncturevine *Tribulus terrestris*

Puncturevine is a flat sprawling summer annual that carpets dusty disturbed areas like roadsides, railways, croplands, orchards and equipment yards. It leaves behind strong spiky seed pods, sometimes called caltrops or goat heads. In the early 1900's it was considered one of the worst roadside weeds since it could easily pierce through early car tires. It remains a nuisance to this day for its ability to damage tires and feet. Puncturevine is also toxic to livestock, particularly sheep.

Puncturevine is native to the Mediterranean region but can be found worldwide in areas with hot summers and mild winters including most of California. It tolerates most soil types but readily infests dry sandy soils.

The biocontrol agents, *Microlarinus lareynii*, a seed feeding weevil and *Microlarinus lypriformis*, a stem boring weevil are credited for large scale suppression of the plant and are still effective today.

If Puncturevine is bothering you, you can manually remove the plant before it flowers and sets seed. Simply fold the sprawling branches back to the root stem and pull from the center of the plant to uproot it. You could also dig it out with a shovel or cut it off at the tap root with a hoe. Shallow tilling (1 inch deep) can be helpful to control seedlings and small plants in larger areas. Do not deep till as this can bury seeds allowing them to germinate years later. Manual methods are considered the most effective control approach in most situations. Chemical control options are available and can be found on the UCANR IPM website at: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74128.html>

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Puncturevine seeds, *Tribulus terrestris*.

Photo by Jack Kelly Clark.



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