



1. Densely clustered seed-heads. 2. Older flower clusters with open male flowers. 3. Dense clumping habit. 4. Infestation along Ekibin Creek in Greenslopes, Brisbane.



Job's tears (*Coix lacryma-jobi*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Job's tears is a short-lived or long-lived clumping grass that grows along waterways, in other damp sites and in roadside ditches. This native of tropical Asia has long been cultivated for its bead-like seeds, resulting in it becoming widely naturalised throughout the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world.

Distribution

This species has become naturalised in a few waterways in major urban centres such as Sydney, Brisbane and Perth. It has also been recorded along other parts of the east coast between Brisbane and Sydney (i.e. the Gold Coast and the north coast of NSW). Larger populations have recently been detected along creeks in suburban Brisbane (i.e. along Ekibin Creek in Greenslopes and Stable Swamp Creek in Sunnybank).

Description

Job's tears is a robust grass usually growing 1-2 m tall. Its upright stems are relatively thick and produce prop roots from their lower joints. The alternately arranged leaves are large (10-50 cm long and 2-5 cm wide) and have a stem-clasping base. These leaves are mostly hairless, but their margins may be fringed with fine hairs.

The seed-heads are clustered in the upper leaf forks on stalks 3-6 cm long, and contain separate male and female parts. The female flowers are contained in rounded or egg-shaped structures at the base of the seed-heads. Each of these greenish structures has a small hole at the top, with a two-branched stigma protruding through the opening. The male flowers are borne in small elongated clusters (1.5-5 cm long), that also emerge from the same opening. Each of the male flowers is 6-10 mm long and has three yellow stamens. Flowering usually commences in December, with fruit being produced through until June. The smooth, shiny, bead-like fruit (5-15 mm long and 6-10 mm wide) usually become hard and bony as they mature. They may be white, bluish-grey, greyish-brown, yellow, orange, reddish or blackish in colour.

Quick Facts

- > Large clumping grass often growing up to 2 m tall
- > Usually growing along waterways and in other damp sites
- > Relatively thick, jointed stems with prop roots near base
- > Bead-like fruit that are usually white, grey or blackish in colour

Habitat

Job's tears forms large and dense clumps along waterways. It also commonly grows in roadside ditches and other damp sites (i.e. wetlands, marshes, moist fields, etc.).





1. Large leaves with stem-clasping bases. 2. Young flower cluster showing two-branched stigma.

Reproduction and Dispersal

The shiny bead-like fruit are dispersed through the deliberate cultivation of this species, and the use of its seeds for a variety of purposes. Seeds may also be dispersed by water, particularly down waterways during floods. Despite having not been documented in this country, there is a definite possibility that seeds are also dispersed by birds and animals.

Why is it an Emerging Threat?

Job's tears is likely to be most troublesome in the wetter tropical and sub-tropical districts of Australia, but it also grows in warmer temperate regions. It is capable of forming dense clumps and large populations which may block the flow of waterways and replace native aquatic plants.

Control Methods

Immature specimens of this species may be removed manually if early identification is possible and care should be taken to remove all of the root system if this method is applied. For mature specimens, stalks containing male or female floral structures or fruit can be removed manually or by mechanical methods. Care should be taken to collect and prevent the dispersal of mature fruit which should be bagged, removed from the infested area and disposed of in a sanitary manner.

While no chemicals are currently registered for the control of Job's tears in non-crop situations in Australia, published research of herbicide trials at the University of Hawaii documents Glyphosate providing excellent control of this species (<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/WC-1.pdf>).

Within Queensland, the use of an appropriate formulation of Glyphosate for the spot spraying of environmental weeds such as Job's tears in non-crop situations is permitted via APVM off-label permit 11463 (<http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER11463.PDF>). Before applying this method of control within other state boundaries, it is recommended that all operators consult any relevant permits or government legislation.

Look a-likes

This plant is quite distinctive and is unlikely to be confused with other species when in flower. Many varieties have been documented, which mainly differ from each other in the size, shape and appearance of the seeds (i.e. whether they are rounded or tear-shaped, soft or bony, etc.).



Top. Prop roots at base of stem.

Bottom. Close-up of immature and mature fruit.

The control methods referred to in Weed Watch™ 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 utilisation 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, Technigro does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

This information has been developed with the assistance of Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Navie. © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2010

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