



Bidens pilosa **COBBLER'S PEGS**

SEPTEMBER 2008

Other common names include Pitchforks, Farmers Friend and Stickybeak. One of the most common weeds in the Shire, most people will be familiar with the tiny forks on the seeds of this plant sticking to clothing.

DESCRIPTION

Bidens is an erect annual to an average height of 60 cm although it can reach 2 m in favourable conditions. The leaves are opposite and divided into 3-5 lance shaped segments with serrated edges. Bright green whilst young, leaves can develop tinges of red and brown on maturity. Flowers are mostly yellow but can have white elements (ray florets) which can be present for periods of the flower's development. The seeds are black or dark brown, slender and about 1cm long, clustered on the end of the stalk. They possess three tiny prongs at one end, which adhere to clothing and animals.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Bidens pilosa seeds can remain dormant for 3-5 years. Soil disturbance will cause prolific germination. The plant matures within 18 weeks. A single plant can have 3-4 generations a year, each capable of producing 3000-6000 seeds. The fibrous root system can be extensive and removal of the plant may cause the disturbed conditions required for germination. The seeds are dispersed very easily by wind, water, fur and clothing. These characteristics mean that *Bidens* will out-compete native species on exposed margins and in revegetation sites.

HABITAT

Bidens favours sunny areas but it can tolerate shade. It thrives in disturbed ground such as wasteland and roadsides (disturbance need only be minimal).



Seeds and flowers.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council



Mature plant.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Bidens originates in South America. The exact date and method of its introduction into Australia is unknown.

It has a wide distribution occurring on the coast, tablelands, slopes and plains of NSW. It is also present in Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. *Bidens* is a major crop weed in the tropical zones.

DECLARATION

Bidens is an environmental weed in Sutherland Shire. It is important that environmental weeds are destroyed, as they can affect human health, or can be invasive in the natural environment killing the native flora and reducing the natural biodiversity. Native animals may also be affected due to the loss of their natural habitat.

CONTROL

If possible, seed heads should be carefully cut from the plant and bagged before uprooting or spraying the plant.

Small infestations can be pulled by hand. Large areas of infestation can be sprayed.

Continual follow-up is necessary, as the prolific seed can remain dormant in soil for several years.



Dense infestation along a roadside.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

