



SEPTEMBER 2008

Acetosa sagittata **TURKEY RHUBARB**

This vigorous weed is also known as Rambling Dock, Arrowhead and Climbing Dock.

DESCRIPTION

Turkey Rhubarb is a perennial plant growing as a scrambling creeper or low climber. It has hairless stems, which are initially green, but turn red with maturity. The plant has yellow underground tubers, which become woody with age. It has alternate leaves that are arrowhead in shape and range from 3-6 cm long and 1-6 cm wide on stalks 6 cm long. The leaves are hairless and slightly lighter underneath than on top.

Turkey Rhubarb has small white flowers, which are arranged in masses on loose multi-branched flower heads up to 30 cm. Its fruit consists of a nut 7-10 mm in diameter and is surrounded by three membranous wings. It is initially green turning pink then red and finally brown on maturity. The seeds are produced over summer and autumn.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Turkey Rhubarb is an aggressive weed that has the ability to completely smother native ground plants and small shrubs. This can have devastating effects on the native flora and fauna, preventing native vegetation growth and thus eradicating food and habitat required by native fauna.

HABITAT

Turkey Rhubarb grows most vigorously in open sunny places but has also been known to grow in shade. It prefers damp or seasonally moist sites and is commonly found along rocky creeks or streams. In Australia it is found in a variety of ecosystems including riparian systems, woodlands, forests, coastal dunes and wastelands and other modified environments.



Dry seed capsules and distinctive arrowhead leaf shape.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

A native of South Africa, Turkey Rhubarb was introduced to Australia for ornamental use. It reproduces by seed and from pieces of the tubers and rhizomes. The seeds are well adapted for wind and water dispersal and are also transported in garden refuse and by attachment to machinery such as mowers. Seed can remain dormant for up to two years. Turkey Rhubarb is a common weed in NSW and has also been found in areas of Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia.

DECLARATION

Turkey Rhubarb 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

Control of Turkey Rhubarb has proven to be difficult and time consuming but can be achieved. The tubers are often hard to remove and can resprout years later even when chemical spray have been applied. To eradicate seedlings and small patches of the weed, it can be dug out ensuring all fruit is removed from the site. The rhizome and tubers have to be dug out completely and all fragments removed from site to prevent regrowth. Removing fruit before it ripens in summer can control spread until arrangements for eradication have been made. The plant can be sprayed with Glyphosate in accordance with the label recommendations. Follow all safety directions as indicated on the label.



Turkey Rhubarb forms dense smothering infestations.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
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