



April 2014

Ada County Pest of the Month

A quick guide to identifying and controlling
invasive plants and animals found in the county

PUNCTUREVINE (Goat Heads)



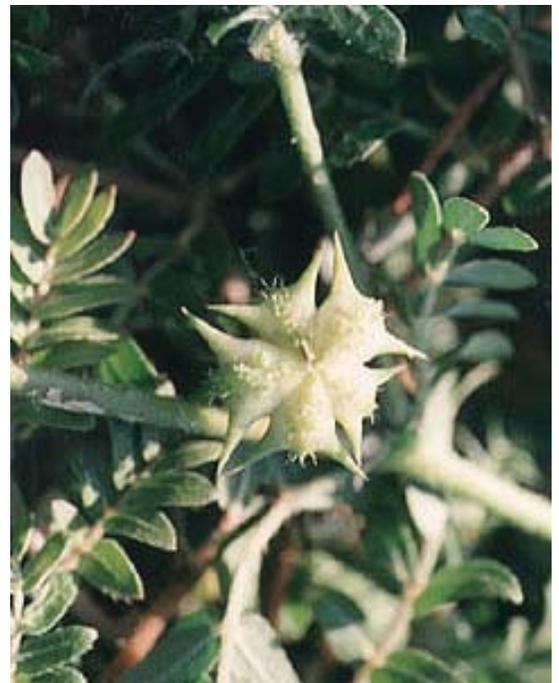
Puncturevine is a very aggressive and resilient noxious weed that can grow up to five feet wide with a tap root that can reach eight feet deep and seeds that typically remain viable for three to seven years.

Puncturevine was introduced from the Mediterranean region, likely from sheep's wool. It spreads by producing seeds with short, sharp spines that allow it to pierce and stick to almost anything, like shoes and tires!

One of the most common noxious weeds in Ada County, Puncturevine can be found in disturbed sites, waste areas, pastures, cultivated fields, gravel areas, roadsides, driveways and walkways.

Quick Facts:

- Common name: Goat Heads
- Goat heads are the hard, spiny shells that encase the seeds of puncturevine. Each goat head contains 2 to 4 seeds that can remain dormant for years before sprouting.
- Puncturevine is a summer annual with highly branched, red-dish-brown stems growing up to 3 to 5 feet in length, radiating from the crown of the plant.
- Flowers are bright yellow with 5 petals.
- Puncturevine doesn't compete well with other vegetation. A healthy lawn will choke out puncturevine in a short time.
- From the time the seed sprouts until it blooms and starts to form seeds takes 2 to 3 weeks.
- The first freeze will kill the plant in the fall.



How to Control:

Successful control of puncturevine first relies on the elimination of the “seed bank”. Plants and seeds from previous years should be gathered and discarded.



Mechanical Control:

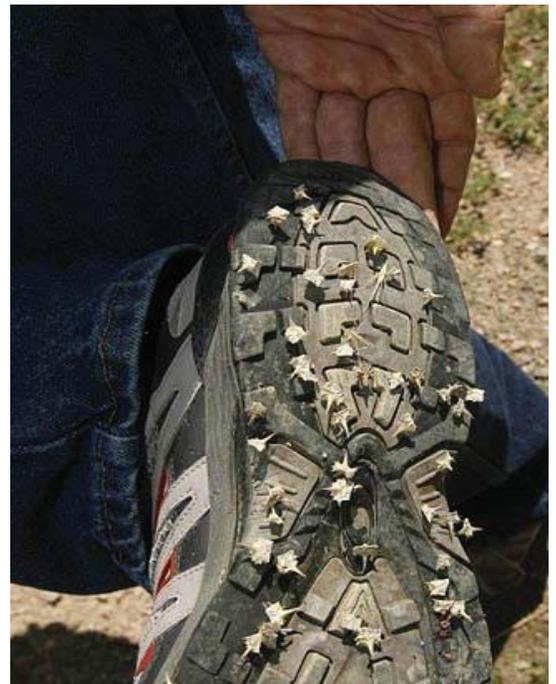
As with all annuals mechanical control can be effective. The low growing mats of puncturevine makes mowing unproductive. Puncturevine can be controlled by hoeing or shallow cultivation. This should be initiated prior to flowering and seed production. Hand pulling is feasible on small infestations, but we seldom recommend these methods.

Tip: An old strip of carpet (or blanket) can be placed over a seed bank to pick up goat heads. Lay carpet over seeds and press firmly on back. Seeds will stick to the carpet which can then be put in a bag and discarded in the trash.

Chemical Control:

A pre-emergent herbicide, such as Telar XP[®], should then be applied in the early spring. Rain fall will help move the herbicide into the soil and then to the weeds root system. Treating puncturevine at the rosette stage in early summer will help prevent puncturevine from maturing and producing more goatheads. If the plant does become established, puncturevine is very susceptible to products containing 2,4-D. On driveways, sidewalks or other areas where you wish to have bare ground, herbicides containing Glyphosate, like Roundup[®], are effective.

Please note that it may take a few years to successfully eliminate an infestation of puncturevine. Repeating control measures annually will help decrease the puncturevine seed bank.



Note: Chemical control of any weed can be difficult and confusing. If you are not experienced in chemical control or do not understand the product label, you should consult a licensed applicator to assist you. Inappropriate application can kill desirable vegetation, and may violate federal law.



For questions or concerns, please contact:

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