

War on Weeds – Weeds are Everybody’s Problem

THE ISSUE: Mediterranean sage

Mediterranean sage (*Salvia Aethiopsis L.*), a biennial, native to Europe, was likely introduced as an ornamental or as a contaminate in seed. It is not palatable to livestock or wildlife, allowing it to outcompete palatable plants. It typically invades rangelands, but it can also establish in agronomic fields, roadsides, and pastures.

Mediterranean sage can grow up to 3 feet tall. Woolly hairs on leaves and stems give young plants a soft appearance and, as they mature, they produce fewer hairs and develop prominent veins. Mediterranean sage forms rosettes that can be 1 to 4 feet in diameter. Stems are square and multi-branched; clusters of flowers are housed at the end of stems. Flowers are yellow to white, 1/2-1 inch wide, and each has 5 petals. A mature mediterranean sage plant can produce up to 100,000 seeds in one year. Seeds are dispersed as the plant is blown in the wind as a tumble weed.



Photo courtesy of L.L. Berry,
Bugwood.org

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Options:

- Prevention – Learn to identify this plant. Never transport unknown plant material. Always plant clean seed!
- Mechanical – Hand digging may be effective for small infestations. Be sure to cut the root at least 2-3 inches below the soil surface. Digging must occur after the rosette stage but before seed is produced.
- Cultural – Use proper grazing techniques to encourage desirable plant growth, do not over graze.
- Biological – Root-Crown Weevil (*Phrydiucus tau*) has been found to reduce the spread of this weed. It feeds on the root crown, preventing the weed from bolting.
- Chemical – There are several herbicide active ingredients that can effectively control this weed. Clopyralid controls existing plants but will not provide residual control like Picloram. Metsulfuron + 2,4-D, or Metsulfuron + Glyphosate are effective at controlling this plant from the rosette stage to early flowering. Use a surfactant, its hairy leaves make it difficult for herbicides to contact the leaf surface. **Always read and follow herbicide label directions!**

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