



Puncturevine

It is a taprooted herbaceous perennial plant that grows as a summer annual in colder climates. The stems radiate from the crown to a diameter of about 10 cm to over 1 m, often branching. They are usually prostrate, forming flat patches, though they may grow more upwards in shade or among taller plants. The leaves are pinnately compound with leaflets less than 6 mm (a quarter-inch) long. The flowers are 4–10 mm wide, with five lemon-yellow petals. A week after each flower blooms, it is followed by a fruit that easily falls apart into four or five single-seeded nutlets. The nutlets or "seeds" are hard and bear two to three sharp spines, 10 mm long and 4–6 mm broad point-to-point. These nutlets strikingly resemble goats' or bulls' heads; the "horns".



There are both biological and herbicidal solutions to the problem, but neither of them provides a solution which is both quick and long-lasting, because seeds remain viable for up to 3–7 years on average. Puncturevine is best controlled with manual removal using a hoe to cut the plant off at its taproot. While this is effective, removing the entire plant by gripping the taproot, stem or trunk and pulling upward to remove the taproot is far more effective. Mowing is not an effective method of eradication, because the plant grows flat against the ground. Chemical control is generally recommended for control of puncturevine but should be done prior to or just at flower emergence.

