



## Hoary cress

This article highlights the weed Hoary cress (*Lepidium draba*, formerly *Cardaria draba*), a declared pest in Western Australia (WA). The Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) is requesting your help to look for this weed so we can determine if it remains absent from south-west WA. Flowering in October, now is the perfect time to be on the lookout!



Hoary cress is one of the targets of DAFWA's weed surveillance project funded by Royalties for Regions (For further information see: <https://agric.wa.gov.au/n/3835>). In WA, hoary cress has only been found in the wheatbelt, where several small infestations are being targeted for eradication.

Capable of growing on a range of soil types it could potentially cover large areas in the south-west of WA and affect many crops. If found in WA it will be eradicated to prevent its spread.

### Tell me more

A member of the cabbage family, Brassicaceae, hoary cress is an erect perennial plant growing 15 to 75 centimetres high. It has an extensive root system, branching stems and grey-green leaves covered in soft downy hairs. The hairs give it the whitish or 'hoary' appearance from which it gets its common name. The leaves are up to eight centimetres long, broadly oval in shape and distributed alternately up the stem. The flowers cluster at the tops of the stems and are small (about five millimetres across) with four white petals.

### Why should it matter to you?

The benign appearance of hoary cress belies its insidious nature. It is a weed of grains, pastures and horticultural crops including orchards and vines, though it will also grow on roadsides and wasteland.

It is difficult to eradicate and the chemicals that control it include hormone type herbicides and residual chemicals that are not suitable for use in many crops and unavailable to the home gardener.

It's seldom grazed, but when stock is forced to eat the plant their milk and meat may become tainted. The roots of hoary cress release chemicals that hinder the growth of cereals

(especially wheat) and horticultural crops including cabbage, onion and tomato. This is called allelopathy. Hoary cress can also harbour diseases and pests which can spread to crops.



### **Life history of hoary cress**

Hoary cress reproduces by seed and by means of its pervasive root system, which spreads laterally and down to a depth of two metres or more. Even very small pieces of the root are capable of forming new plants. The seed is spread by stock and machinery and in grain. Seeds germinate in the autumn and form rosettes during the winter and spring. Rosettes can be formed out of season if the root system is disturbed by cultivation.

### **What you can do**

Practice good biosecurity and avoid bringing any contaminated seed, machinery or livestock onto your property. Be vigilant and learn to identify the weeds on and around your property. Report suspect hoary cress and unfamiliar weeds using the free MyWeedWatcher app or online reporting and mapping tool ([agric.wa.gov.au/myweedwatcher](http://agric.wa.gov.au/myweedwatcher)) or contact the Pest and Disease Information Service on freecall 1800 084 881 or [info@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@agric.wa.gov.au).

For more information about hoary cress identification and control, search our website [agric.wa.gov.au](http://agric.wa.gov.au).

### **Reporting unfamiliar pests**

The Department's Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS) screens enquiries for new weeds, pests and plant diseases, which could negatively impact the success of WA's local horticulture and agricultural industries and the ability to grow home produce.

You can report biosecurity concerns or unfamiliar pests using our free smartphone or tablet apps, or online! Use **MyWeedWatcher** for weeds or **MyPestGuide** for pests and diseases. You can also contact us direct if you have concerns about unfamiliar weeds, pests or plant diseases.

Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS). [info@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@agric.wa.gov.au). 1800 084 881  
Department of Agriculture and Food, WA. 3 Baron-Hay Court, South Perth WA 6151.