

PUNCTUREVINE - *Zygophyllaceae*

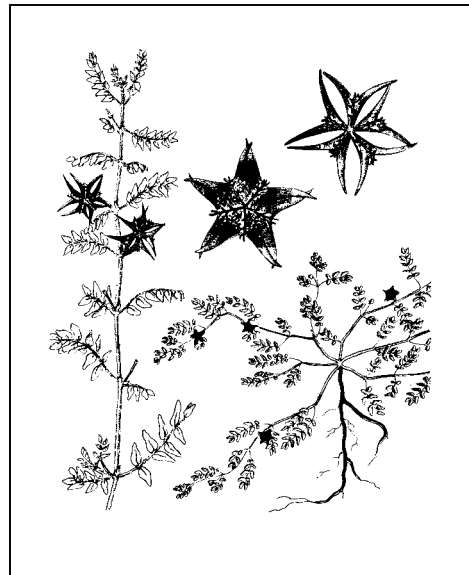
By Merle Keys,

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Puncturevine, the dreaded killer of bicycles tires, the bane of many a dog paw, and a force to be reckoned with when found in the carpet. This weed is not so lovingly known by many other names, goathead, puncture weed, tackweed, and Mexican sandbur.

Puncturevine is a summer annual plant that grows prostrate above the ground forming a dense mat with trailing stems, each 1/2 to 5 feet long. The plant can be quite pleasing to the eye, with pretty little yellow flowers and can seem like a nice ground cover. The problem is the fruits or seed pods that this plant produces. The fruits consist of 5 sections which at maturity break into spiny pods that cause problems for dogs, cats, and the kids in the neighborhood. These spines have an uncanny way of showing up in houses to be stepped on later, or end up embedded in bicycle tires.



Puncturevine was introduced from southern Europe and is now widely scattered over much of the U.S. It grows in pastures, cultivated fields, waste areas, and along highways and roads. The seed can remain dormant in the soil for 4 to five years, which makes eradication difficult.

A program should be implemented by landowners to treat the young plants with 2,4-D Amine or Roundup before the plant has a chance to grow into a large mat full of these spiny seeds. If a landowner finds large patches in bloom late in the season, it is recommended that the plant be dug up and burned. As the plant matures, the seeds have a tendency to drop off when the plant is disturbed. Be careful to try and pick up the seeds and dispose of them.

The flower and seed production usually occurs from June to October. Late summer showers help to germinate the seeds so watch areas where this plant has grown before and dig up each new crop and dispose of them.