

Mimosa pudica

Recognize the problem

Family: Fabaceae (pea family); subfamily: Mimosaceae.

Common name: Sensitive plant.

Annual or perennial, erect or scrambling, prickly, strongly-branched shrub (15-100 cm tall); stems cylindrical, reddish-brown or purple with scattered recurved prickles 3-4 mm long, with age becoming woody at the base.

Leaves: Dark-green, alternate along branches, twice-divided; leaf stalks prickly or hairy, with leaflet branchlets (each 2.5-5 cm long) located in pairs along the central stalk; smallest leaflets are 6-12 mm long, 1.5 mm wide, oblong and pointed; arranged in 6-25 pairs per branchlet; leaves fold together at night or when touched.

Flowers: Bright purplish-pink, round heads, 9 mm across, with four prominent stalks (stamens), arranged singly or in small groups on stalks.

Fruits: Pods; oblong, flattened, with bristled edges and containing 1-5 seeds; green turning brown as they mature; occur in clusters and break into one-seeded segments. Each plant can produce up to 700 seeds per year.

Background

Origin: Latin America.

Introduction: As ornament.

Habitat: Tropic and subtropic regions; grows in a wide range of soils from sea level to about 1300m; tolerates full sun or heavy shade; usually in moist places.

Spread: Seeds are transported by running water, vehicles, machinery, livestock, humans, as seed contaminant and contaminated earth.

Invades: Crops, plantations, pasture, disturbed areas, wastelands, urban open space, drainage ditches, forest edges/gaps, savannah, wetlands and roadsides.

Impacts: Sensitive plant is a serious pest of crops and pastures, including rice, sugarcane, sorghum and maize. It forms dense ground cover, even in partial shade and can be a fire hazard. Presence of sensitive plant increases the cost of weeding. It is also considered a serious pest in plantation crops such as coffee, pineapple, coconut and oil palm. In direct-sown upland rice, infestations of *M. pudica* can lead to a 10-70% reduction in grain yield. It is toxic to ruminants, pigs and chickens, especially when cut and dried. When hand-weeding prickles can break off in the skin and cause serious septic sores. It also can cause serious problems in lawns.

Mimosa pudica flowers and leaves. (Photo by Karan A. Rawlins, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org)



Mimosa pudica cluster of seed pods. (Photo by Forest and Kim Starr, Starr Environmental, Bugwood.org)



Scientific name(s) > *Mimosa pudica*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



Authors: CABI. Edited by H. Mwangi, B. Ita, W. Kouko, J.M. Maina, V. Momanyi, V. Mwaja
Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation, Kabete
email: wambuihm@yahoo.com

Edited by Plantwise.