

# 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



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