

Argemone ochroleuca

Recognize the problem

Family: Papaveraceae (poppy family).

Common names: Mexican poppy.

Amharic: Nech lebash; **Kiswahili:** Mkumajalaga.

Annual prickly herbaceous plant initially forming a basal rosette of leaves, then later developing upright (i.e. erect) stems up to 1.2 m tall.

Leaves: Blueish with whitish veins with spines on the edges. Deeply divided into 7 to 11 coarse irregular lobes. In a basal rosette and alternating along the stem (generally 6-20cm, 3-8cm wide). Exude yellowish sap when broken or damaged.

Flowers: Pale yellow or cream-coloured, ca. 3-7 mm in diameter with numerous stamens. Placed at the end of branches, on a short stalk or not. There are six petals. The three sepals (below the petals) are shed when the flower opens.

Fruits: Light-brown ellipsoid capsule (2.5-5 cm long), covered by stout yellowish prickles. Contains numerous seeds.

Seeds: Dark brown or black, globular, ca. 1.5 mm in diameter.

Background

Origin: Tropical America.

Introduction: As contaminant in seeds.

Habitat: Semi-arid, sub-tropical and temperate regions; wide range of habitats and soil types.

Spread: By seed, primarily as contaminant in seed or fodder, by water, soil and machinery.

Invades: Crops, primarily affected are cereals, groundnut, cotton, lucerne, and potato; also invades fallow land, roadsides, disturbed sites and banks of water bodies such as drainage ditches.

Impacts: Mexican poppy is a troublesome weed of crops and pastures. Infestation reduces the yield of many cereals such as wheat, and of other crop species and has thus a negative economic impact. It is regarded as a major weed of crops in Ethiopia. Seeds may become tangled in the wool of sheep, reducing its value. It is extremely poisonous to livestock and humans, although accounts of livestock poisoning are rare as animals generally avoid the weed. The main danger to livestock, horses and poultry usually comes from fodder and other stockfeeds that have become contaminated with its leaves or seeds. Due to its very prickly nature it can cause injury to humans and livestock.

Mexican poppy flowers and stem. (Photo by Harry Rose, South West Rocks, Australia (CC-BY))



Rosette (Photo by Harry Rose, South West Rocks, Australia (CC-BY))



Scientific name(s) > *Argemone ochroleuca*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



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