



# Puncturevine

O & T Guide W-13

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Puncturevine, *Tribulus terrestris*, is a prostrate summer annual with many creeping or spreading stems, yellow flowers with five petals, and woody seed pods covered with spinney burs. The burs are very sharp and pose a threat to people, animals, pets, and some tires. The plant's foliage is toxic to livestock when ingested; sheep are especially vulnerable because they can tolerate and will often eat the plant. Puncturevine is also known as goathead, bullhead, caltrop, Mexican sandbur, and tackweed.

The stems originate from a taproot and can grow to about 3 ft. long with much branching. Stems are green to red or brown in color, often with long hairs, and grow horizontally along the ground.



The plant's leaves consist of 3-7 pairs of opposite leaflets that grow along a common midvein; each leaflet is oval or

oblong in shape, about 0.2-0.6 in. long, green to dark green in color with smooth edges, sometimes with long hairs or bristles on the leaf or leaf edge.



The flowers grow singly at leaf axils and are 0.2-0.6 in. in diameter, bright yellow, with five petals. Woody seed pods also develop singly at leaf axils and are 0.2-0.4 in. in diameter, green to brown in color, often hairy, with many sharp burs each 0.10-0.25 in. long. The plant grows from a semi-woody taproot and reproduces by seed only.



### Management

- Physical removal is effective if performed before seed production
- Establishing competitive vegetation can help control infestations
- Herbicides are effective
- The stem weevil (*Microthrips lypriformis*) and seed weevil (*M. lareynii*) are effective biological controls

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