



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 3

Volume 3
Number 4 July- August, 1954

Article 6

7-1954

Weeds of Western Australia—Mexican poppy

G R. W Meadly
Department of Agriculture

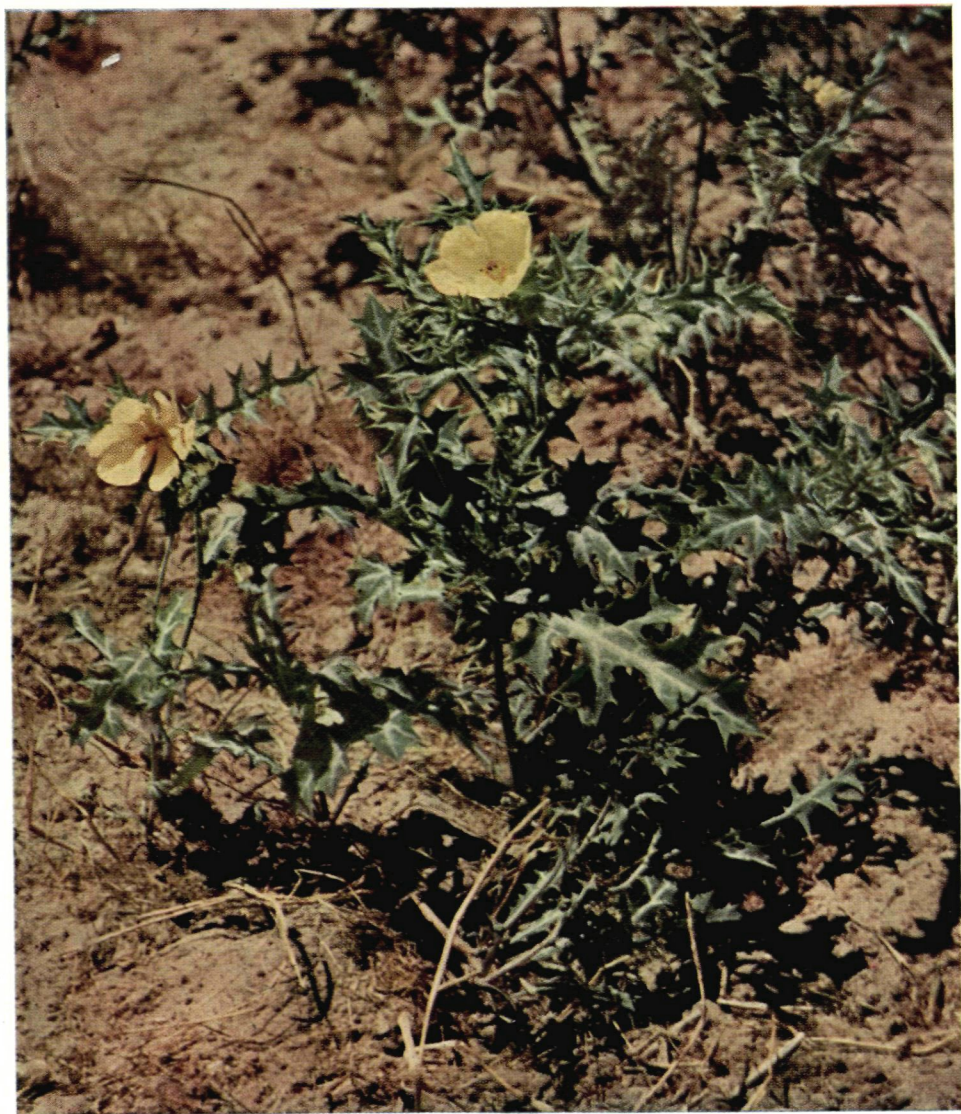
Follow this and additional works at: https://library.dpird.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture3

Recommended Citation

Meadly, G R. W (1954) "Weeds of Western Australia—Mexican poppy," *Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 3*: Vol. 3: No. 4, Article 6.

Available at: https://library.dpird.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture3/vol3/iss4/6

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Agriculture at Digital Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 3 by an authorized administrator of Digital Library. For more information, please contact library@dpird.wa.gov.au.



MEXICAN POPPY

[*Argemone Mexicana* L.]

Mexican Poppy, as the name implies, is native to Mexico, but also extends to Texas and Central America. In this State it occurs mainly in the Geraldton district although a few plants have been found in widely scattered areas. Besides having toxic properties it can be a troublesome competitor in crops and pastures

WEEDS of Western Australia

By **G.R.W. MEADLY** M.Sc.

Officer in Charge, Weeds and Seeds Branch

MEXICAN POPPY

(*Argemone Mexicana* L.)

AS the name implies, Mexican Poppy is native to Mexico, its range also extending northwards to Texas and southwards to Central America. Although usually referred to as Mexican Poppy, it is also known as prickly or yellow poppy and blue thistle or white thistle. The blue and white are descriptive of the leaf colouration which is shown clearly in the coloured illustration.

It has been a resident of New South Wales for a long period, the French botanist Verraux having collected specimens in George Street, Sydney, in 1845. One fears that a plant-collecting trip along that thoroughfare at the present time would be both unprofitable and dangerous.

The plant is now widespread in New South Wales and Queensland, especially on soils which retain moisture during the summer months. It has also proved of some consequence in the other Australian States.

Just as the method of introduction to the Eastern States is not known with certainty, its early history in Western Australia is not well defined. It may have become established firstly in the Geraldton district where it now occurs freely on some of the moist flats. Other districts from which it has been recorded include Meekatharra, Menzies, York, Toodyay, Beverley, Tambellup, and Bunbury. Mexican Poppy is known to have been distributed as an impurity in hay and chaff, and this explains in part, at least, its introduction and spread to the areas mentioned.

DESCRIPTION

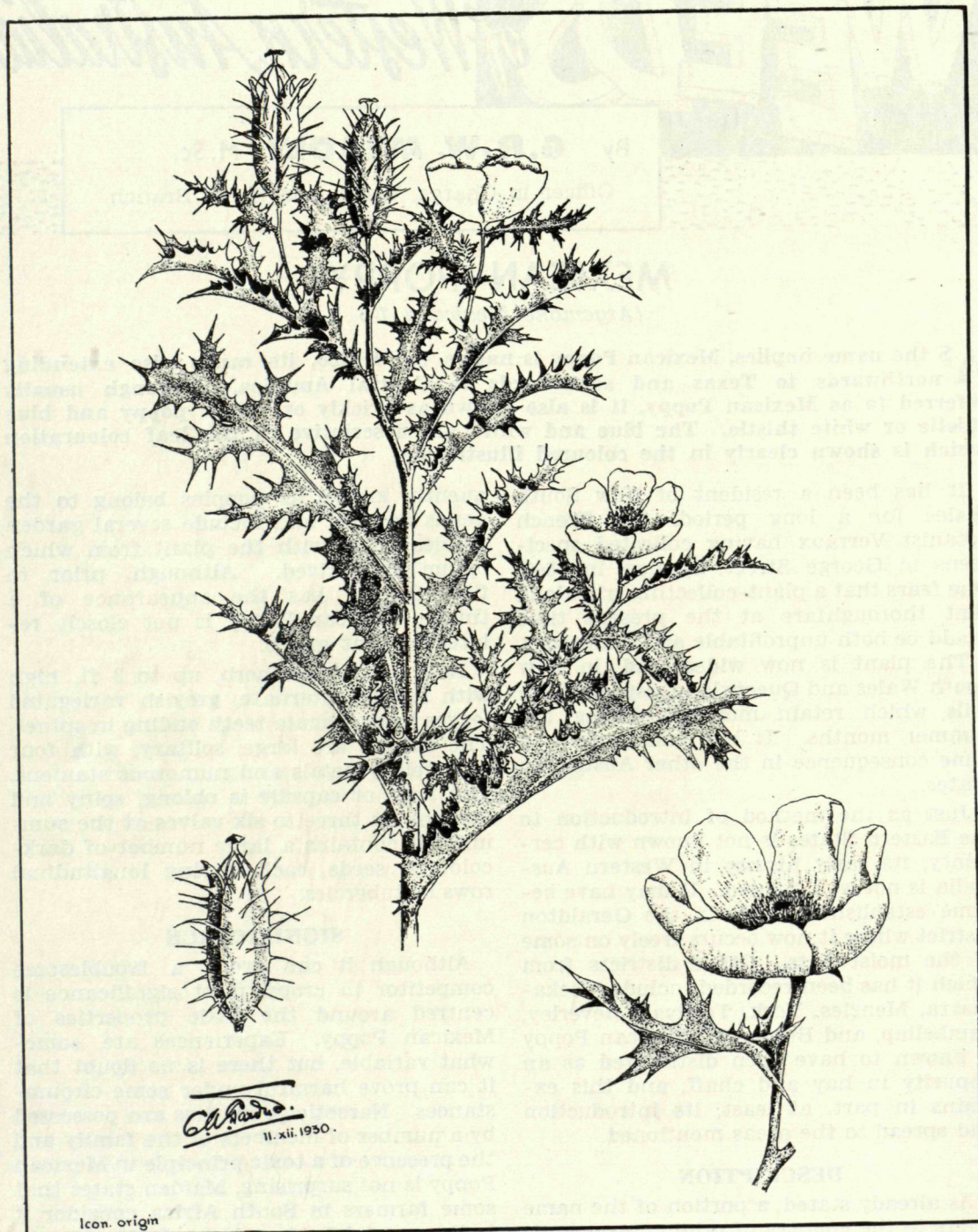
As already stated, a portion of the name refers to the country of origin. *Argemone* being a member of the poppy family, *Papaveraceae*, the remainder of the name is justly applicable. The plants more fre-

quently known as poppies belong to the genus *Papaver* and include several garden species along with the plant from which opium is derived. Although, prior to flowering, it has the appearance of a thistle, Mexican Poppy is not closely related to that group.

It is an annual herb, up to 3 ft. high with sessile, alternate, greyish variegated leaves having acute teeth ending in spines. The flowers are large, solitary, with four pale yellow petals and numerous stamens. The fruit or capsule is oblong, spiny and opening by three to six valves at the summit. It contains a large number of dark-coloured seeds, each having longitudinal rows of tubercles.

SIGNIFICANCE

Although it can prove a troublesome competitor in crops, most significance is centred around the toxic properties of Mexican Poppy. Experiences are somewhat variable, but there is no doubt that it can prove harmful under some circumstances. Narcotic properties are possessed by a number of members of the family and the presence of a toxic principle in Mexican Poppy is not surprising. Maiden states that some farmers in South Africa consider it to be a useful fodder plant. In New South Wales, although regarded as being unpalatable and seldom eaten by stock, losses have been attributed to it on a number of



MEXICAN POPPY
(*Argemone Mexicana* L.)

occasions. In Queensland, White states that the plant is suspected but rarely eaten by stock. He also refers to its reputed toxic properties, but states that it has only proved dangerous "where it has been cut and allowed to wilt and the subsequently softened plants fed to poddy calves. He also makes reference to the intensely bitter sap which renders it unpalatable to animals.

In New South Wales, illness in fowls and a temporary drop in egg production were attributed to the large quantities of Mexican Poppy seeds present among wheat grain on which the birds had been feeding. Subsequently, feeding trials appeared to confirm the assumption. Several birds kept under observation died after varying periods of ingestion.

The toxic principle is not clearly understood, but apparently has decided irritant properties.

Mexican Poppy is a primary noxious weed for the State.

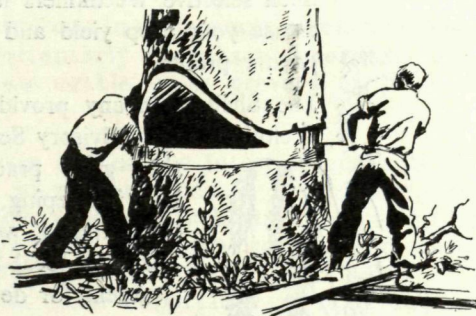
CONTROL

Being an annual, prevention from seeding must be given first priority when considering control measures. Isolated plants should be pulled or grubbed when they first appear, and those which have seeded before being noticed, should be removed carefully and destroyed, taking care not to scatter the seeds.

With more extensive areas, cultivation is the most practical method, and a year of clean fallow will do much to reduce the extent of this weed. When it occurs in a crop it is advisable to cut for hay before seeds have formed. If it persists in pastures, Mexican Poppy can be controlled by mowing at the early flowering stage in order to prevent seed formation. This procedure is not always entirely satisfactory, however, as the plants sometimes produce lateral flowering shoots following cutting, especially when they are growing on moist land or are favoured by late rains.

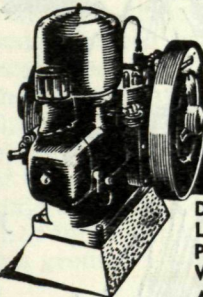
Although not highly susceptible to the hormone-like herbicides, when the plants are small they can be controlled by spray-

ing. More mature plants are much more difficult to kill. When growing in a cereal crop one pound of acid equivalent of 2,4-D amine is recommended while under pasture conditions good control can be expected from 1½ pounds acid equivalent of the ester per acre.



**THE NEW MODERN
DIESELS**

**MCDONALD'S Imperial
Mac diesel ENGINES**



Direct Injection — Full Diesel.
Low Fuel and Oil Consumption.
Prompt, Easy Starting.
Working Parts Totally Enclosed.
Automatic Lubrication — Oil
Sealed Bearings. Medium Speed, Heavy Duty, Long
Working Life. Obtain full particulars NOW.

A. H. McDONALD & CO. 36074

36-42 Monger Street, Perth.
 Also at Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide.

Write for Leaflet giving further details

**A. H. McDONALD & CO.
PTY. LTD.**

Showrooms & Works:

566-574 BRIDGE ROAD,

RICHMOND, E.1., Victoria

38-42 MONGER STREET, PERTH

and at MELBOURNE, SYDNEY, BRISBANE & ADELAIDE

Increase your crop yield

Weeds make waste — so follow the lead of thousands of farmers throughout the world by using Shell selective Weedkillers to increase your crop yield and give greater profits.

The Shell Company provides a Technical Field Advisory Service that gives practical help in keeping your crops free of weeds. Ask your local Shell Agent for details.

SHELL WEEDKILLER RANGE INCLUDES

a number of specialised Weedkillers developed to combat weeds that cause crop loss. The main Shell Weedkillers are:

SHELL WEEDKILLER 'D'

for controlling weeds in cereal crops, i.e., Skeleton weed, Mustard, etc.

SHELL WEEDKILLER 'M'

for controlling weeds in pastures and in crops under sown with clovers.

SHELL WEEDKILLER 'E'

for controlling "harder to kill" pastoral weeds.

SHELL WEEDKILLER 'B'

for controlling blackberry, gorse, Ti tree, eucalypts and other perennial type woody weeds.

SHELL WEEDKILLER 'G'

for controlling couch, kikuyu and other grasses.

SHELL WEEDKILLER 'Q'

for controlling general weeds in orchards, vineyards, roadsides and building sites.

you can be sure of



SO542/24

