



PATERSON'S CURSE

Have you seen this weed?



Flower - Photo: WA Dept. Agriculture and Food



Young Plant - Photo: Vic. Dept. Agriculture

- Name:** Paterson's Curse or Salvation Jane (*Echium plantagineum*)
Vipers bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)
- Growth Habit:** Paterson's Curse starts off as a large, flat rosette of slightly hairy leaves with well marked veins. Flowering stems can grow to be 600-900 mm tall. These uncoil with new flowers at the tip and developing seeds protected by bristly husks further down the stem.
- Type of plant:** Herbaceous annual or sometimes biennial.
- Flowers:** Deep blue to purple, 20-30mm long with five petals fused into a trumpet shape.
- Fruit/Seed:** Crinkled brown or grey seeds in groups of four around the stem protected by stiffly bristled husks. Seed may remain dormant in the soil for up to six years but most will germinate within two years.
- Dispersal:** Roughened seed coats allow seed to adhere to wool, fur and clothing. Viable seed is passed by animals that have been feeding on the weed. Seeds can be carried by water runoff. An important means of dispersal is contaminated hay and feed grain or movement of contaminated soil and machinery.
- Distribution:** Paterson's Curse occurs in all agricultural areas of Tasmania in small scattered infestations. Commonly it is found around old home sites, poultry sheds and on road sides. New infestations in urban areas have been linked to movement of contaminated machinery or soil. In pasture it is often linked to the feeding out of contaminated feed grain.
- Status:** Paterson's Curse is a declared weed in Tasmania largely due to actual and potential impacts on agriculture. As such, importation, sale and distribution of this plant is prohibited. Homeowners, landholders and other stakeholders are legally required to control this declared weed on their land as specified in statutory weed management plans available from the DPIPW website.
- Weed Impact:** Once established, Paterson's Curse can strongly compete with pasture species reducing grazing productivity and increasing control costs causing more frequent pasture renovation. It contains an accumulative poison which may cause chronic liver damage to stock although they will usually avoid it if other green feed is available. It can cause severe hay fever in some people. Although it has the potential to be a damaging weed, if outbreaks are spotted early, control and eradication can be achieved by using an integrated approach.

CONTROL OF PATERSON'S CURSE IS ESSENTIAL

Removal from Gardens: Although pretty, Paterson's Curse is not a suitable garden plant due to its invasive nature and impacts on agriculture and the environment. As a declared weed in Tasmania, there is also a legal requirement to remove it. There are many other brightly coloured non-invasive natives and exotics that can be used in its place.

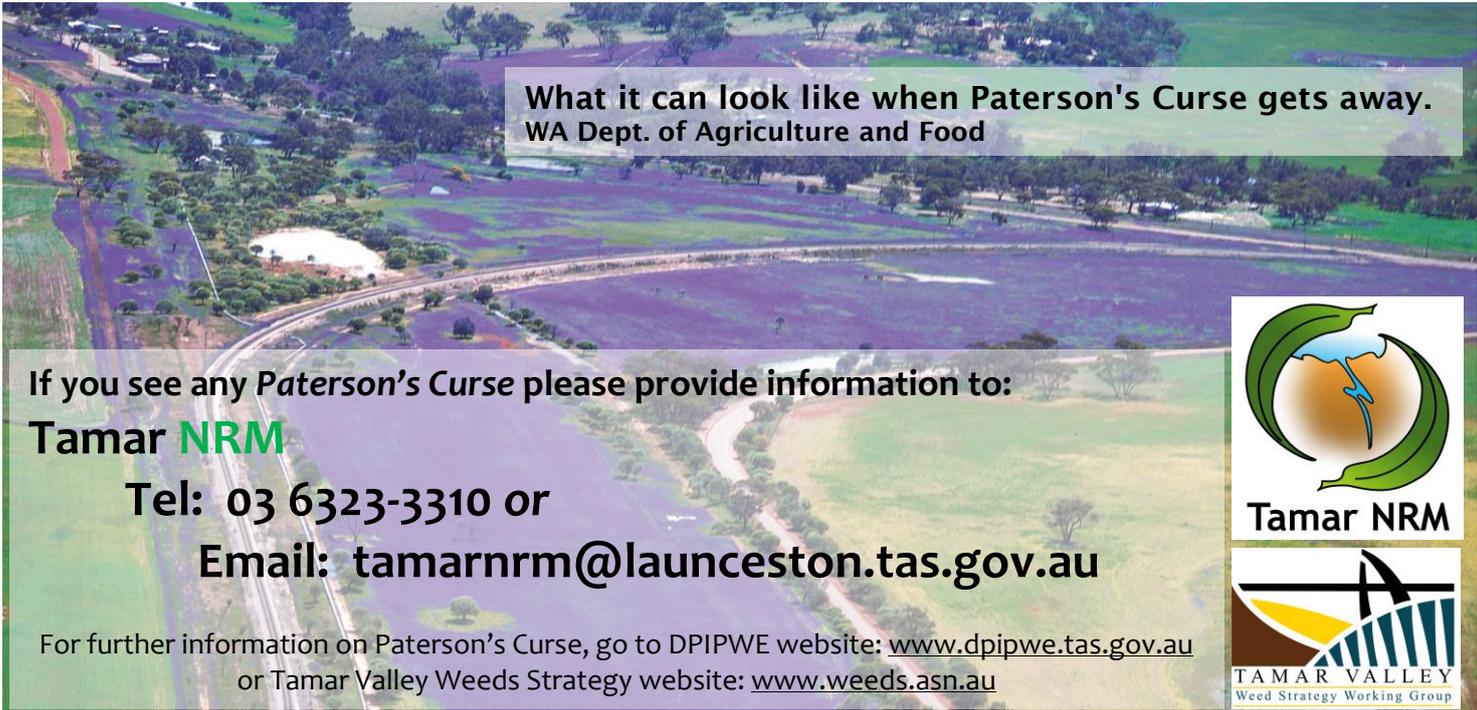
Mechanical Control: Hand hoeing, pulling and cutting are methods suitable for isolated plants provided the growing point and the top 20mm to 40mm of the tap root are removed otherwise regrowth may occur. Flowering plants should be burned, or otherwise destroyed, because seed may continue to mature on a plant even after it is cut, pulled or hoed.

Cultivation: Paterson's Curse can effectively be controlled in arable areas by cultivation, especially if followed by cropping with either root or cereal crops or establishment of a vigorous smothering pasture.

Chemical Control: Paterson's Curse seeds normally germinate in autumn after sufficient rainfall and are best controlled at this early seedling stage. Herbicides can be either applied by backpack, handgun and boom spray units depending on the size of the infestation. The use of METSULPHURON METHYL (Brushoff™ or Brushkiller™) is recommended for use on Paterson's Curse in non crop and pasture situations due to its low toxicity and nil withholding period. This product does not have a withholding period for stock and is unscheduled under the Poisons Act. This product will affect clovers and newly sown pastures. As with all herbicide use, please adhere strictly to the label – it is there to protect the user, the environment and enables the product to be used effectively. For more information on chemical control: <https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/invasive-species/weeds/weeds-index/declared-weeds-index/patersons-curse-and-vipers-bugloss/patersons-curse-herbicides-for-control>

Biocontrol: Three effective complementary biological control agents, Paterson's Curse Crown Weevil, *Mogulones larvatus*, Paterson's Curse Taproot Flea Beetle, *Longitarsus echii*, and Pollen Beetle, *Meligethes planiusculus*, have been established in a number of sites in the Tamar and may be available and could provide a long term solution to the control of Paterson's curse in this state as part of an integrated management programme. Check for these species before spraying.

Remember: To control any infestation of weeds you must ensure that flowering plants are controlled early and are unable to seed and you must follow up to protect your previous efforts. For weeds enquiries contact Biosecurity Tasmania on 03 6165 3777, Weed.Enquiries@dpiwwe.tas.gov.au or visit www.dpiwwe.tas.gov.au



What it can look like when Paterson's Curse gets away.
WA Dept. of Agriculture and Food

If you see any Paterson's Curse please provide information to:

Tamar NRM

Tel: 03 6323-3310 or

Email: tamarnrm@launceston.tas.gov.au

For further information on Paterson's Curse, go to DPIWWE website: www.dpiwwe.tas.gov.au
or Tamar Valley Weeds Strategy website: www.weeds.asn.au

