

Death Weed or Poverty Weed

(*Iva axillaris*)

Other names: small-flowered march elder, devils weed.

Death weed or poverty weed is a perennial herb widely distributed throughout areas east of the Cascade Mountains. It is found principally on saline or alkaline soils and is frequently troublesome on agricultural lands and overgrazed range.

Death weed has an unpleasant odor. Clusters of stems 8 to 24 inches high are sent up from a series of woody horizontal rootstocks that spread in all directions and send up new shoots from the joints. This characteristic adds to the plant's ability to spread and resist eradication. The leaves are numerous, thick, grayish-green, varying in length from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches and as much as $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. Lower leaves are opposite on the stem, the upper alternate and smaller. The leaf surface is covered with small, stiff, inconspicuous, whitish hairs, giving a silver sheen when viewed at some angles. The greenish bell-shaped flower heads are about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter and hang downward from the axis formed by the leaf and stem. Each flower head is surrounded by a circle of small leaf-like structures. Seed cases are about $1/10$ inch long, egg or wedge

shaped and flattened; they vary in color from gray to almost black.

This weed competes vigorously with crops and range. It becomes established in alkali patches and spreads to fertile ground. It is not poisonous to animals as the name implies.

CONTROL. Death weed has been controlled by seeding spring grains and spraying with $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of 2,4-D acid equivalent per acre. This rate of 2,4-D is more than is normally used on spring grain, but it has controlled death weed with little injury to the grain. Spraying should take place before the boot stage of growth of the grain. This program must be followed for several years for effective control.

Sod forming grass, such as adapted wheatgrasses or vigorous growing bunchgrass such as tall fescue, when sprayed selectively with 2,4-D will control poverty weed.

Poverty weed can be eradicated with two years of intensive cultivation. Do not allow more than 10 days green growth between cultivations. Usually this means cultivating every three weeks. Cultivate 3 to 4 inches deep with a duckfoot type cultivator.

Prepared by Oregon State University Extension weed control specialists in consultation with Extension specialists at Washington State University and the University of Idaho.



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