



Government
of South Australia

WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

TWO-LEAF CAPE TULIP



Two-leaf Cape tulip plant



Closeup of cormils



Closeup of flower

TWO-LEAF CAPE TULIP



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Cape tulip, *Moraea miniata*, is a perennial weed introduced from South Africa. This plant is a garden escapee that has now become a significant weed throughout southern Australia. Two-leaf Cape tulip is difficult to control chemically due to the dormancy of corms below the ground. It is therefore important to keep two-leaf Cape tulip off clean properties or to recognise and destroy new infestations before they become established.

Distribution

Eyre Peninsula	- isolated outbreaks and very light infestations
Northern pastoral	- small, scattered infestations around Eurelia
Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula	- scattered infestations
Murray Mallee	- isolated outbreaks in the Eden Valley area
South East	- scattered infestations
Central	- small isolated patches

Impacts

All parts of two-leaf Cape tulip are toxic to all types of grazing animals. The poison is a glycoside that causes loss of appetite, weakness and depression, blindness, dysentery, scouring and paralysis of the hind legs. Death usually occurs within 3 days and treatment is charcoal or kaolin to absorb the poison. Stock accustomed to grazing on infested pasture are not affected, as they know not to eat the plants. This results in desirable pasture species being replaced by two-leaf Cape tulip due to selective grazing which further decreases stock capacity.

Recognition

Two-leaf Cape tulip is a perennial herb to 60cm high with annual leaves and flowers growing from an underground corm surrounded by a black tunic. Each plant has 2 -3 leaves, which are flat, 1-2cm wide and up to 1m long. The flowers are smaller and more numerous than those of one-leaf cape tulip, 2 to 4 cm diameter with six pink petals whose yellow bases are dotted with green. The root system is fine, shallow and fibrous.

Two-leaf Cape tulip does not produce seeds, even though small capsules are very rarely formed after flowering. Instead, large numbers of cormils (tiny corms 1-2 mm long) are formed in the angle of each leaf and also around the corm at the base of the plant.

Biology

Two-leaf Cape tulip occurs on a range of soil types, but usually on heavy soils in sunny locations. It is less common than one-leaf Cape tulip, although the two species may grow together.

Corms germinate after the autumn rains and new corms already begin to form before the flowers appear in September. The aerial growth dies by November.

Corms can stay dormant in the soil until a favourable season. It is estimated that two-leaf Cape tulip can accumulate up to 20,000 cormils per square metre.

Two-leaf Cape tulip was originally grown as a garden ornamental. It is now spread by corms and cormils in contaminated soil and produce, or attached to farm machinery and stock.

Further Information:

Parsons, W.T. & Cuthbertson, E.G. (2000). *Noxious Weeds of Australia*. 2nd edn. Inkata Press.

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For more advice on recognising and controlling two-leaf Cape tulip, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board:



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