

RED SESBANIA



Introduction

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Red Sesbania (*Sesbania punicea*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.

Originating from South America, Red Sesbania has become very invasive to many parts of North America. It thrives in a variety of habitats, including coastal plains, roadsides, ditches, canals, and riparian corridors.

Identification & Behavior

Red Sesbania is a deciduous shrub or small tree. It displays reddish-orange flowers that are ½ to 1 inch long that grow in dense and drooping clusters. At maturity, the plant can grow up to 15 feet tall. It produces seedpods that are 3-4-inches long, dark brown, and with 4 wings that run vertically down the pod. The shrub has alternate leaves that are 1 inch long and have dark green leaflets. The bloom period is from March to October.

The fruit and flower of *sesbania* are characteristics of the legume family. The pods are sharply pointed, contain 4-10 seeds separated by partitions and make a characteristic rattling sound when shaken. Plants generally begin to fruit at 2-3 years of age and can survive for up to 15 years.

Impact

The presence of Red Sesbania can have serious ecological and economic consequences. The shrub forms in dense communities making it extremely difficult to access riparian areas. It also contributes to erosion and flooding and large infestations can decrease water flow and recreational use. It is toxic to not only humans but livestock, lowering forage quality. This is a concern for both growers and ranchers.

This shrub can survive the occasional freeze. It reproduces by seed and is transported by waterways and horticulture.

Top left: Red Sesbania flower cluster

Middle: Red Sesbania plant

Right: Red Sesbania seed pod

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Control & Management

Rapid response is vital when it comes to the control of Red Sesbania because it grows at a fast pace with dense populations. Mechanical control methods include hand pulling which can be very easy considering the shrub does not have a large root system.

Chemical control methods are most effective when the shrub is cut down to a stump. This method eliminates the seed pods and targets the plant at the base to enter the root system. This practice should be used judiciously to minimize impact on non-target species. It is important to apply herbicide solution immediately after cutting.

Prevention

Identification is key when it comes to preventing and controlling the spread of Red Sesbania. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at (530) 822-7500.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Red Sesbania (*Sesbania punicea*) and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

Resources

For more information about Russian Knapweed, visit the UC Davis Weed & Information Center website at:

https://wric.ucdavis.edu/information/natural%20areas/wr_S/Sesbania.pdf

For more weed newsletters or information about our other county programs, visit our website at:

<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>



Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

-Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office