

ALIEN INVASIVE PLANT ALERT

FAMINE WEED



Family: Asteraceae

Scientific Name: *Parthenium hysterophorus*

Common Names: Famine weed, Feverfew (E); Demoina bossie (A)

Description

Annual herb, growing up to 1,5m high. Stem erect, longitudinally grooved, hairy with a deep tap root. Leaves broad, deeply lobed, pale green & hairy. Small white flowers in compact heads, each flower has five distinct "petals". Small black seeds about 2mm long, distributed by wind and animals.

Habitat

This species invades roadsides, rail sides, water courses, cultivated fields and overgrazed land. Severe infestations have been reported from Australia, Ethiopia, India and South Africa.

In Namibia famine weed has been reported in the Khomas Region (Windhoek & farms south of Windhoek), Otjozondjupa Region (Otavi – land next to TransNamib) and Zambezi Region (Ngoma floodplains).

Invasion Potential

This weed is highly invasive due to its short lifecycle. Once established **one plant can** set thousands of seeds within four weeks.



Negative Impacts

Health: Skin and respiratory irritant after prolonged exposure.



Agriculture: Crop yield losses & seed contamination.

Meat and milk from livestock that has consumed the plant becomes tainted and not fit for consumption.

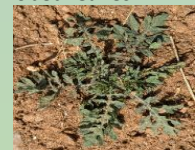


Ecosystem: Inhibits growth and seed germination of other plants through allelopathy.



Eradication Measures

- The lifecycle very short; all eradication measures must take place **within** two weeks after germination, to prevent flowers and maturing seeds.
- Identify Famine Weed: After germination, *Parthenium* grows in a rosette of lobed leaves.



- **Uproot all plants, with their roots.**
- **Please wear gloves and long sleeves to prevent skin contact.**
- **If flowers are already present, please wear masks to prevent pollen from entering the lungs.**
- Avoid unnecessary shaking of the plants to avoid shedding of pollen and seed.
- **Every plant part should be burned (stems, leaves, flowers & seeds).**
- Follow-up visits and consequent removal must be done every ten days after intervention to prevent regrowth from seeds in the soil.
- **PLEASE TAKE ACTION, SPREAD AWARENESS AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE IF THE INFESTATION IS HUGE.**

Please contact the National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and the Cactus Clean-Up team to report any sightings or for further information and guidance. The Cactus clean-Up team can provide assistance with removal at a small fee.

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References & Images:

<https://invasives.org.za/fact-sheet/famine-weed/>

<https://www.cabdigitalibrary.org/doi/10.1079/cabicompendium.45573#sec-2>

Gupta, P. & Kumar, S. 2021. *Parthenium hysterophorus*: A Notorious Weed of Global Significance, Just Agriculture Vol 6(1)

Preston, G. Famine Weed (*Parthenium hysterophorus*) Insignificant-looking, but a devastating invader (Presentation)

