

## Control of jo-jo (also known as Onehunga or bindii weed)

By Officers of the Pest and Disease Information Service

Jo-jo, Onehunga (pronounced Oh-nee-hunga: NZ Maori place name) or bindii, are the alternative names for a troublesome lawn weed (*Soliva pterosperma*) which is now widespread in the Perth metropolitan area. This winter-growing annual, originally from South America, produces a seed capsule protected by spines, which, as many householders will know, make it impossible to walk on a badly infested, prickly lawn in bare feet. A closely related species, (*S. sessilis*) has also been found in Perth.

Plants first emerge with the winter rains in May and continue to germinate for several months. Flowers begin to appear in the spring and continue to form at the base of the leaves (axils) until early December.

Jo-jo is often confused with carrot weed (*Cotula australis*), a native plant which at first glance seems similar to jo-jo. However, carrot weed begins to produce flowers during the early part of winter, with pale yellow flowers on the ends of stalks. Whereas jo-jo flowers much later and has no flower stalks.

The illustrations show the different leaf structures of the two plants.

### Control

#### **Manual removal is usually ineffective**

If jo-jo plants are to be removed manually, some of the root needs to be removed to avoid regrowth. This can be a very tedious process in a badly infested lawn. It is also

difficult to spot all plants in the lawn so complete removal is unlikely. Manual removal is therefore more likely to be successful with just small infestations.

#### **Chemical treatment provides best results**

The most effective control method for jo-jo weed is to blanket-spray all the affected lawn with selective herbicides. The most effective herbicides for killing jo-jo contain bromoxynil plus MCPA. Herbicide products are sold in small packs under various trade names, and are available from hardware stores and plant nurseries. These products will also kill many other broadleaved weeds including flatweed (cats ear), dandelion, capeweed, cudweed, and plantain.

Some products also contain dicamba, and one of these should be used if clovers or oxalis species are also present.

For larger areas and commercial applications, the same herbicides are sold in large packs, again under various trade names. These are available from agricultural chemical suppliers listed in the Yellow Pages.

Note, as the products vary in the concentration of active herbicide, the manufacturer's recommended rates (given on the label) should be followed. For this reason also, price alone is not necessarily an indication of value for money.

The weeds should be dead seven to 10 days after spraying.



Spiny (prickly) seed cases of jo-jo



Pale yellow carrot weed flowers on ends of stalks

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### **Timing is critical**

Jo-jo can be sprayed from mid-June onwards. The smaller the plants, the more easily they are killed, but it is necessary to delay spraying until a full emergence has appeared. Do not delay for too long, though, as flowering begins in spring and once the seed spines have formed the lawn will be prickly and uncomfortable for the rest of the season. It is better to spray twice than to wait too long for full emergence.



*Prickly seed spines of jo-jo (close up)*

Be guided by the application times on the label of the product you purchase.

Where the problem has been overlooked and some prickles have formed, it is still worthwhile spraying as the plants can be killed, preventing them from forming many more prickles.

### **Avoid spray drift onto sensitive plants**

Take care to avoid spray drifting onto garden plants, especially roses, pome and stone fruit, and grape vines. These are very sensitive to the MCPA component of the

products and, even if they do not suffer permanent damage, the chemical contact will produce unsightly twisted leaves. If some accidental spray drift does occur, its effects can be reduced if the plant's leaves are immediately hosed off. Fully dormant plants will be safe.



*Carrot weed (close up)*

### **Prefer if someone else does the spraying?**

If you do not wish to do the spraying yourself, see the list of weed spraying contractors in the Yellow Pages (look under Weed Control Services). Contact a contractor in advance so they can schedule your job. Also point out other weeds you may want controlled at the same time, and any roses or other sensitive plants that may be at risk from the spray.