



# Biosecurity alert: Pokeweed

(*Phytolacca americana*)

## The pest and its impacts

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is a large, perennial shrub that is toxic to livestock, humans and can contaminate agricultural produce. It is a declared pest, prohibited in Western Australia (WA) with a control category of C1 (Exclusion) and must be eradicated if found.

Pokeweed has recently been found in Perth and several locations in the south-west of WA, including Balingup, Bridgetown and Pemberton. A collaborative program to eradicate this weed is now underway with government and industry working together. The aim is to control all pokeweed plants prior to them setting seed during summer.

**This plant is toxic to both humans and livestock and can contaminate agricultural produce.**

### Pokeweed characteristics:

- Pokeweed is found in disturbed areas, along roadsides and in gardens.
- Seedlings are often found under roosting trees as birds eat the berries and are unaffected by the natural chemicals.
- Seeds can be transported in soil.





## LOOK for this pest

- large perennial shrub up to 2.5 metres
- large bright green leaves (up to 40cm long) on a smooth purplish stem
- white to magenta flowers in elongated clusters that hang from the branches
- deep purple – black berries form in summer and are the most distinctive characteristic

Pokeweed is similar to inkweed (*Phytolacca octandra*), which is a widespread weed in the south-west of WA. Pokeweed is taller, has larger leaves, and the berry stalks hang down.

### Key points:

- All plant parts, especially the root, contain numerous saponins and oxalates and can be fatally toxic to humans and livestock when ingested raw, or with improper preparation.
- It regrows after it dies back to the thick central taproot after winter if only the above ground material is removed.
- Individual plants can live for several decades.



Pokeweed



Inkweed



## REPORT suspected sightings

- Be aware of any new or unusual plants
- Prompt action is necessary to assist in eradication
- Note the date, time and location of the pest
- Take photographs, if possible



### Report your observations

MyPestGuide® Reporter  
via app or online  
[mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au](https://mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au)

Pest and Disease Information Service  
(08) 9368 3080  
[padis@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:padis@dpird.wa.gov.au)

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