

## Hudson pear (*Cylindropuntia rosea* & *Cylindropuntia tunicata*)



Above: The vicious spines of Hudson pear can cause serious injury. Photo: Mallee CMA.

Left: A member of the Mallee Flood Recovery Environmental Employment Program crew indicates Hudson pear. Photo: Mallee CMA.

**Hudson pear is a thorny cactus species of Mexican origin. There are two different species of Hudson pear (*Cylindropuntia rosea* & *Cylindropuntia tunicata*) and both can invade and dominate understorey vegetation, and cause serious injury to humans and fauna species. It is an emerging weed and both species of Hudson pear have been listed as Weeds of National Significance (WoNS).**

### **Problem**

Weeds of National Significance are priority weeds that pose threats to primary industries, land management,

human or animal welfare, biodiversity and conservation values.

Hudson pear has particularly vicious spines which are capable of penetrating footwear and vehicle tyres. The spines can cause serious injury to humans, livestock, working animals such as horses and dogs, as well as native fauna.

### **History**

Hudson pear was first detected within natural environments in the Lightning Ridge area during the late 1960s. Verbal reports indicate that opal miners deliberately used the thorny plants to



### At a glance

- Hudson pear is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS);
- Isolated populations have been found in the Victorian Mallee;
- The spines of the Hudson pear are extremely dangerous and pose a threat to humans, livestock and wildlife.

protect their diggings from nocturnal prowlers and thieves, but these reports are unable to be verified.

### **Description**

Hudson pear is a branched cactus which grows up to 1.5m high and 3m wide. It has a cylindrical trunk with rope-like segments and sharp spines which can reach 3.5cm in length. Flowers are 5cm wide and develop in late spring and summer. In the *Cylindropuntia rosea* species, flowers are pink and spines are white. In the *Cylindropuntia tunicata* species, flowers are yellowish-pink and spines are straw-coloured.

### **Dispersal**

Hudson pear reproduces vegetatively. As spines attach themselves to wildlife, boots, tyres, etc. they take with them segments of the fleshy plant. These segments will eventually separate from the spines and form their own root system in the new location.

Some large 'host' plants have the capacity to drop dozens of segments, making them readily available to be spread by wildlife and feral animals such as rabbits and foxes; floodwaters; as well as humans and machinery.

### **Distribution**

There are a number of Hudson Pear populations reported in the Mallee region, including populations near the following locations:

- Mittyack;
- Underbool;
- Ouyen;
- Tol Tol;
- Beggs Bend; and
- Natya.



Above: Dead Hudson pear after treatment. Photo: Mallee CMA.

### **Control option**

#### **Chemical removal**

When spraying herbicides, care needs to be taken to ensure total coverage of the plant. This is because any missed segments have the capacity to form new infestations if they come into contact with the ground and form roots.

#### **Mechanical removal**

While successful on isolated plants, physical removal is generally not recommended because of the danger of serious injury occurring. Once uprooted, plants need to be disposed of correctly to avoid new infestations arising from this material. Correct disposal methods include burying and/or burning.

#### **Preventing spread**

When travelling in Hudson pear infested areas, take care not to leave designated roads. If you do need to travel off road, check vehicle tyres and undercarriage for any sign of Hudson pear and remove before leaving the area.

If you have been outside the vehicle, remember to check clothing, footwear,

and any other equipment which may have come into contact with Hudson pear.

### **What you can do to help**

Land managers can help prevent the spread of weeds on their property by:

- Maintaining vehicle hygiene to reduce spread of weeds by machinery and equipment;
- Minimising ground disturbance;
- Monitoring their property to detect new weeds early and eradicate them before they become established;
- Monitoring stock and domestic animals for Hudson Pear spines.

### **Further information**

For more information on Hudson pear, contact the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) on 5051 4377.

### **References**

Dedini, M & Bye, J, July 2012, Targeted distribution survey of Hudson Pear in known areas in the North West of Victoria, DSE for Mallee CMA.

NSW Department of Primary Industries website  
<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/>

## **Project Partners**