

## Don't let them get away!

Invasive weeds are most effectively controlled when they and their numbers are small – a little weed control work today will save many dollars and days of work in years to come. The number of infested areas of St John's wort in Tasmania are still relatively small, now is the time to take action!

## Control that weed!

Control methods may include a combination of selective grazing regimes, cultivation, the selective application of herbicides and ongoing monitoring.

**Selective grazing** of St John's wort can be an effective means of controlling this weed in pasture, however, this must be carefully planned to ensure adequate control and to avoid harming livestock.

The **establishment of crops or pasture** can also be used to suppress large St John's wort infestations – consult an agricultural specialist for the best strategy for your property.

**Chemical control** alone is unlikely to be sufficient to control St John's wort in the long term, however, can be a good first step towards population control. This weed can be controlled by foliar application of glyphosate, fluroxypyr or triclopyr + picloram + amino pyralid, depending on its location and the surrounding vegetation. If herbicides are to be used, spraying is best undertaken from late spring to early summer. **Always read and follow the label**, wear protective equipment and avoid off-target damage during chemical control.

**Mechanical control** (ie digging up the plants) of St John's wort is **not advised**, as this plant resprouts from root fragments.

Any control program for St. John's wort within pasture areas is best conducted in cooperation with neighbouring properties.

The best solution for your site will vary on the type and intensity of infestation – for advice and more details on control methods, consult the DPIPWE website ([www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/weeds](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/weeds)).

## Do the right thing

Weed waste dumped in bushland or local reserves gives pest plants a leg-up into new areas. Do the right thing, and dispose of your weed waste responsibly. St John's wort flowerheads should be double-bagged and burnt on-site in a closed incinerator.

Weeds are easily spread by contaminated machinery and people – check your clothes, shoes, vehicles and other machinery for soil or plant matter that could be carrying weedy plant seeds.

## Get informed

St John's wort is a significant weed threat for Southern Tasmania. For more information contact your local Council office or call the DPIPWE on 1300 368 550.

## weeds of southern tasmania



st john's wort  
*Hypericum perforatum*



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



## Impacts

Invades agricultural areas, disused areas and roadsides  
Poisons stock. Reduces agricultural productivity and biodiversity

## Current distribution in Southern Tasmania

Limited distribution in Southern Tasmania



weed warning

# st john's wort

## Background

Native to Europe, Asia and North Africa, St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) was first introduced to Australia in 1875, as a garden plant with medicinal properties. Within twenty years, it had become a major weed in north-east Victoria and today ranks as one of southern Australia's worst pasture weeds.

St John's wort is a hardy perennial plant which aggressively invades pasture, grasslands, open woodlands, roadsides, railway sidings, river banks and forestry areas. It's capable of swamping both native and introduced vegetation, outcompeting surrounding plants and preventing new seedlings from becoming established. Its sticky seeds are readily transported by animals, water and contaminated machinery, and can stay viable after twenty years in the soil.

Despite its medicinal uses, St John's wort is toxic to stock. Livestock that ingest this plant become highly photosensitive, meaning that body parts exposed to the sun become itchy and inflamed. The toxins within this plant can also cause a range of other illnesses in stock, which may lead to loss of productivity, and eventually to the death of affected animals. Stock may become poisoned through grazing directly on the plants, or consuming them in contaminated hay.

In New South Wales and Victoria, farmers have been forced to abandon vast areas of formerly productive pasture to large, dense St John's wort infestations. Fortunately for Tasmania, St John's wort populations are still quite limited – we can still stop this weed, before it gets away!

## Get a positive ID

St John's wort is an upright, perennial herb which may grow up to 120cm tall. The plants grow from a tap root, and produce other roots which grow out from the plant, from which new plants may sprout.

Branches of this weed are positioned opposite one another, have two slight ridges running along them, and are sometimes slightly reddish. Leaves also sit opposite one another in pairs on the branches, and as they do not have stalks, sprout directly from the branches. The leaves are generally 5-30mm long and 1.5-5mm wide, and a paler green on their lower surface. They are distinctive in having small, translucent glands, which look a bit like pin pricks if you hold them up to the light.

The flowers are bright yellow, with black dots along the margins of five petals, and can appear from around October through to March, peaking over the summer months. They're usually 1-2.5cm across, and produce sticky capsules which when ripe, split open to reveal small brown seeds. A mature plant can produce as many as 33,000 seeds every year.

St John's wort is sometimes mistaken for ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), another declared weed, in areas where both weeds are present. These plants can be distinguished by comparing leaves and flowers – ragwort has larger, deeply divided and wrinkled leaves, and unlike St John's wort, possesses "daisy" type flowers.

If you believe you have found a specimen of St John's wort, collect a sample of it in a sealed bag and contact your local Council office or a DPI/PWE representative.



## Weed management – it's your responsibility

Many people unwittingly harbour these pest plants in their gardens – some even actively grow them, knowing nothing of their weedy ways.

Although St John's wort is not yet widespread in Tasmania, it may have already made its way onto your land.

This plant is a declared weed under Tasmania's *Weed Management Act 1999*. It is your responsibility to control St John's wort on your land. Failure to remove it from your property could result in legal action. It is also illegal to distribute the plant or its seeds in any way, whether as cut flowers, in contaminated stock feed, or on dirty equipment and machinery.

**Weeds are a growing problem.**

**Act now – Make a plan and make a start!**

### Images:

1. Young leaves showing red-ish stems and perforations
2. Five-petaled flower. Notice black dots along the margins
3. Leaves, stems and flowers