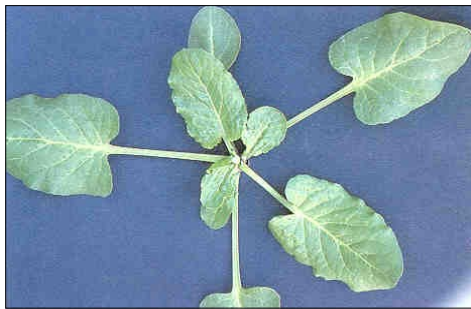


SPINY EMEX



SPINY EMEX – *Emex australis* (also know as cathead, three-cornered jack, prickly jacks and cape spinach). Spiny emex is native to South Africa. In 1830 it was introduced into Western Australia, where it was cultivated as a vegetable. Spiny emex grows mainly on lighter sandy soils but can thrive on heavier soils that retain water.

DESCRIPTION – Spiny emex is a vigorous, annual, broadleaf weed usually germinating in autumn and early winter. Initially the plant develops as a rosette of 6 to 8 spade-shaped leaves above a deep, fleshy tap root. Leaves are dark green, soft, succulent, alternate, ovate to triangle, mostly 3 to 6 cm long, on long stalks. The margins are often wavy. Flowers are inconspicuous and light green.



Hard woody fruits develop from the inconspicuous flowers. They are triangular in shape (7 to 9 mm long), with three

sharp triangular projecting spines. These spiny fruit form clusters in the axils of the leaves. When the fruit falls to the ground, one spine always points directly upward.

WHY IS IT A WEED – It is a serious contaminate of pastures and lucerne hay. Can produce a population of 30 plants per square metre. It reduces potential yield in winter cereals and grains. Sheep have developed blackleg from infected wounds in the feet caused by the spiny fruit. Spines will attach to almost anything that passes over it, especially the rubber tyres of vehicles, shoes, feet of animals or bags of produce. In some areas, dogs have to be fitted with leather boots to allow them to work.

