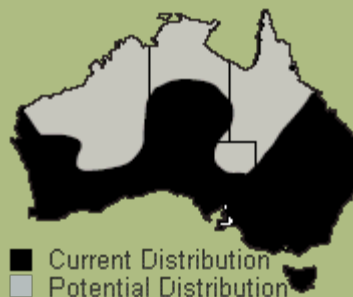


Weed Identification

Australia > > **Common sowthistle**

Common sowthistle

Sonchus oleraceus



[Pictorial glossary of plant part terms used in this guide.](#)

Alternative Name(s): Annual Sowthistle, Sowthistle.

Family: Asteraceae

Form: Herb

Origin: Native of Europe, Asia and northern Africa.

Flowers/Seedhead: Many small flowers (florets) in heads 1–2 cm wide, bracts around heads 10–15 mm long. Flowers all year round.

Description: Annual herb to 1.2–2 m high. Stems hollow. Leaves variable; basal leaves 5–25 cm long, lanceolate, base not stem clasping; stem leaves 6–35 cm long, lanceolate, usually lobed and with pointed stem clasping basal lobes. Flowerhead made up of heads in flat-topped panicles. Seeds brown.

Distinguishing features: Distinguished by non-rhizomatous habit; milky sap; leaves thin and soft, margins of leaves lobed to toothed; flower stalks and bracts around heads with or without glandular hairs, bracts around heads without dense hairs when young; bracts around heads in 3 rows, the inner row longest; all florets yellow, bisexual, fertile and with ligules 4–6 mm long; area where seeds attach to the head (receptacle) pitted, hairless; seeds 2.5–4 mm long, compressed, wrinkled, margins narrow, without a beak and topped by hairs 5–8 mm long.



Flowerheads & leaves with scattered bristles on the margins; infested by aphids, Bilpin, NSW, September
photos G. Sainty, P. Abell

Dispersal: Spread by movement of seed, by wind, water or movement in mud.

Confused With: Other *Sonchus* species but seeds of this species are characteristic.

Notes: Widespread and common. A serious crop weed in some areas. Does not persist in pasture as it is readily grazed. This thistle is widely naturalised around the world. Moderately salt tolerant.

References:

Plants of Western New South Wales. G. Cunningham et al., 1981, pages 718.

Web References: [Search Australian web sites for further information on this weed.](#)



Seeds & hairs



Juvenile

This weed has been included in the WEEDeck field guide as card H73

More information about WEEDeck is available from [Sainty & Associates Pty. Ltd.](#)

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National Weeds Strategy
Telephone: (03) 6344 9657
Fax: (03) 6343 1877
Email: jthorp@weeds.org.au

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