

# ESPARTILLO

Broad-kernel Espartillo (*Amelichloa caudata*) is an invasive perennial weed from South America related to Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle Grass. In Australia, Espartillo takes over natural ecosystems and farmland. Once established it is very hard to eradicate.

## What's wrong with Espartillo?

It harms natural ecosystems, especially grasslands, replacing the indigenous species. Native grasslands are one of our most threatened ecosystems.

It harms farmland. Stock prefer not to eat it, so grazing land where it dominates is land lost to food production.

It is also a nuisance in lawns, where its rigid spiky tufts are hard to mow and uncomfortable to sit on.

It is a noxious weed in NSW and Tasmania, but not yet in Victoria. Governments, whose environment departments are often short of funds, often declare noxious weeds too late, shutting the gate after the horse has bolted.

Getting rid of small new infestations is the most efficient way of tackling it. If it is left for years, the soil is likely to contain thousands of seeds, which can continue to germinate for many years.

## How to get rid of it

It can be dug out (eg with a full-size or miniature mattock, depending on the size of the tufts). But before digging out, cut any seeds off and put them in a bag, so that digging out doesn't shake them onto the ground.

To dispose of the seeds and plants, they can be burnt or put in a sturdy bag without open weave, taped shut, then put into a second bag and put in the rubbish bin or taken to the tip. Potting mix bags are ideal for this.

Do not put them in a green waste collection or compost heap as this will spread the seeds elsewhere. Even when no seeds are visible at the top of the plant, the stems can have self-fertilised "seeds" inside old stems near their base.

Herbicide can be used for dense infestations that are too big to dig out. Flupropanate (eg Taskforce, Apparent) is often used for stipoid weeds (ie Serrated Tussock, Chilean Needle Grass, Espartillo, etc). It is washed into the soil by rain or heavy dew, where it slowly kills the parent plants and then kills emerging seedlings of Espartillo (and some other grasses, but normally not broad-leaf plants) for 2-5 years. Because it takes months to kill the parent plant, it's best to spray with flupropanate before winter, to make sure the plants are dead before they are due to flower and seed (late spring and summer).

Spraying with glyphosate can kill parent plants quickly, but will not kill seeds nor stop new seedlings germinating. A mixture of flupropanate and glyphosate can be used to spray plants two weeks or more before they seed.

Always follow the label (ie manufacturer's instructions) if using herbicide.

## Not to be confused with

Sometimes people mistake Espartillo for a native grass because it can look similar to the native Large Tussock-Grass (*Poa labillardieri*). Important differences are:

- Espartillo seeds have awns (tails) 10-20mm long. Large Tussock-grass seeds have no awns
- The tops of Espartillo tufts often feel spiky and prickly. Large Tussock-grass tufts do not feel prickly.
- Espartillo leaves are much stiffer than those of Large Tussock-grass. Espartillo usually has rolled (or sometimes flat) leaves and the local forms of Large Tussock-grass have flat or folded leaves.

## What does it look like?



Espartillo tufts

Rob & Fiona Richardson



Espartillo seed heads. The second one has lost some seeds and the empty pairs of husks can be seen

Bernard Slattery

The seed has a tail (awn), but, unlike Chilean Needle Grass, has no collar (corona) between the seed and the awn.



Ian Higgins



Ian Higgins

Large Tussock-grass. Inset: part of a seed head. The seeds have no awns.

## References

- <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/195>
- [http://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/data/03030800-0b07-490a-8d04-0605030c0f01/media/Html/Amelichloa\\_caudata.htm](http://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/data/03030800-0b07-490a-8d04-0605030c0f01/media/Html/Amelichloa_caudata.htm)
- [http://vro.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/weeds\\_espartillo](http://vro.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/weeds_espartillo)