

Fireweed

Senecio madagascariensis

January 2015

Fireweed is an introduced annual or short-lived perennial herb, up to 70 cm tall with variably divided leaves, and few to many yellow daisy flowerheads.

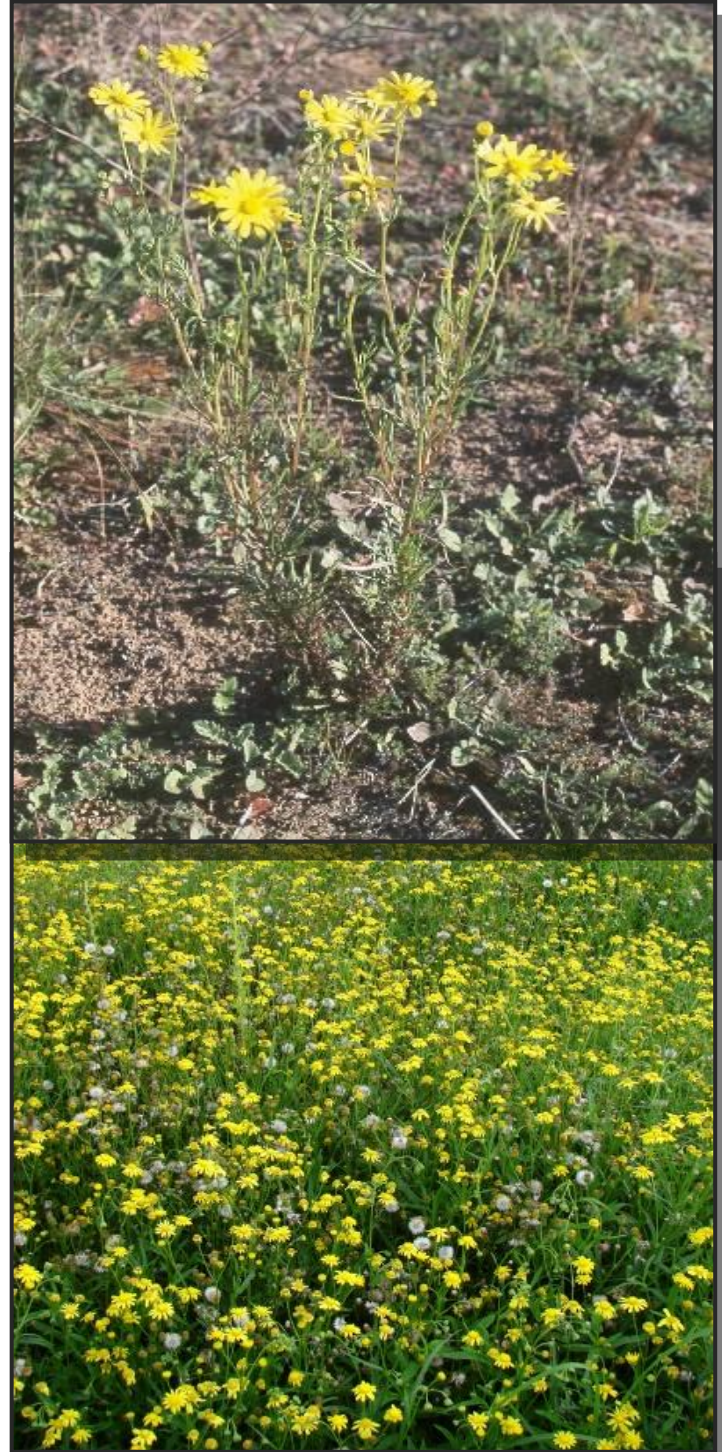
As a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) it is now declared under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, with prohibition on sale and movement throughout South Australia, and enforced destruction in all NRM regions except Alinytjara Wilurara and SA Arid Lands.

- **Other common names:** Madagascar groundsel, Madagascar ragwort.
- **Family:** Asteraceae
- **Synonyms:** *Senecio bakeri*, *Senecio junodianus*, *Senecio ruderalis*.
- **Origin:** Madagascar and southern Africa.
- Closely related to the native variable groundsel, *Senecio pinnatifolius* (formerly *S. lautus*) and may be confused with it. They differ in terms of leaf shape and the number of petals and green bracts on flower heads.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Fireweed is a poisonous weed of pastures, presently found mainly on the east coast of Australia.

- can dominate summer-growing and irrigated pastures, competing with pasture species such as kikuyu
- not a strong competitor but can increase in response to disturbance and heavy grazing
- contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids which are toxic to stock and can cause liver damage





DESCRIPTION

Habit: erect hairless annual or short-lived perennial herbaceous plant up to 70 cm tall. Sometimes branched, depending on environmental conditions.

Leaves: variable, lance shaped, bright green, 6 cm long x 2 cm wide with serrated margins. **Root:** shallow branched taproot 10 – 20 cm deep. **Flowers:** in loose clusters of flower heads, with 12-15 yellow ray florets, which are surrounded by 19-21 greenish (involucral) bracts that look fused together at the base. **Fruit:** Up to 100 single-seeded fruits per head, brown and 1.5-2.5 mm long, with a 4-6.5 mm pappus. *Flowering time:* mainly autumn to late spring, but can be all year round when suitable conditions occur.

HOW IT SPREADS

Fireweed is spread by wind dispersed seed, attached to animals, in contaminated stock feed, or mud on the wheels of vehicles, which can transport seed for long distances.

HABITAT

Fireweed colonises roadsides, cultivated pastures, and disturbed land, on a wide range of soil types. Prefers sub-humid to humid subtropical climates. Moist conditions are needed for the seedlings to establish.

DISTRIBUTION

Fireweed is not yet present in South Australia. It is naturalised in established in coastal and sub-coastal areas of Queensland, New South Wales and eastern Victoria, with occasional sightings in tablelands west of the Great Dividing Range.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Beware of bringing new weeds to your property with fodder or stock from interstate. Report unfamiliar weeds to your regional NRM office. Seek urgent control advice if you have this weed. Further information is at www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/fireweed/.

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For more information

Contact your local Natural Resources Centre for information on controlling declared weeds:

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au

Further weed control information is also available at:

www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa

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