

Onion weed

Allium triquetum

What does it look like?

Grass-like perennial (<60 cm) with a strong garlic smell, growing from main bulbs (<10-15 mm diameter) and producing offset bulbs. Fleshy, straight leaves (2-5, each 20-60 cm long), with white papery sheaths, usually die back in late Spring. Fleshy, soft, 3-sided flower stalk (20-60 cm high) is surrounded by leaves at the base, and supports bell-shaped flowers (10-15 mm long, Oct-Nov) that are 5-petalled and are white with green stripes on each petal. Seed capsules (7 mm diameter) contain black seeds.

Seed and bulbs are spread via water and soil movement, dumped vegetation, contaminated machinery and nursery plants. Sources include wasteland, roadsides, sprayed areas, hedgerows, gardens.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Disturbed forest and shrubland, streamsides, herbfield, bare land, especially after spraying or other clearance to bare land.

Why is it a problem?

Seeds and offset bulbs ensure distribution. Tolerates hot and cold, wind, semi-shade, damp heavy soils. Intolerant of strong competition for space, heavy shade. Forms dense mats in Winter/Spring in disturbed sites, discourages native species from establishing. Likely to invade disturbed forest and shrubland, streamsides, herbfield, bare land, especially after spraying or other clearance to bare land.



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Control Methods

Physical control

Dig out small patches (all year round): dispose of at refuse transfer station, burn or bury.

Herbicide control

Overall spray: metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (3g/10L).

Spraying with glyphosate only gives plant more room to expand. Better to overplant with taller species. In regenerating habitats, often better to leave altogether to minimise disturbance.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

Related Links

Weedbusters <https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/what-are-weeds/weed-list/onion-weed/>