

CORN SPURRY

Spergula arvensis L.

Family: *Caryophyllaceae* (Pink).

Other Scientific Names: None.

Other Common Names: Sandweed, pickpurse.

Legal Status: Not categorized.



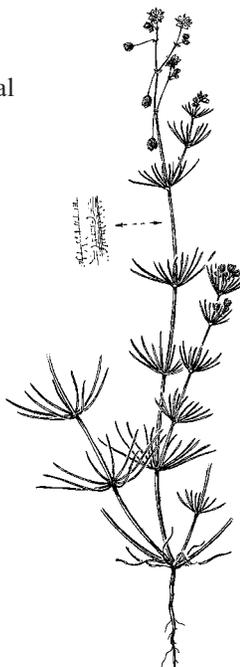
Identification

Growth form: Annual forb.

Flower: White flowers are numerous, small (about 6 mm across), and borne in forked clusters at the end of the stems.

Seeds/Fruit: Capsules are egg-shaped, 1.2–2.2 cm long, and contain numerous seeds. The tiny seeds (1.0–1.5 mm) are blackish with tiny whitish warts. They are circular, except for a notch on one side and a narrow, winged margin.

Leaves: The slender, fleshy leaves are attached to each stem node in whorls of 6–10. Each needle-like leaf is about 1 mm thick,



20–50 mm long, rounded on the upper surface, and grooved on the lower.

Stems: Several, branched, yellowish green, somewhat sticky, prostrate to erect, and 10–60 cm tall.

Roots: Small taproot.

Seedling: Seedlings have a few needle-like leaves with a blunt tip arising from the centre of the sprout.

Similar Species

Exotics: The Pink family contains many weedy species, but none have the whorled, needle-like leaves of corn spurry.

Natives: The sand spurries (*Spergularia* sp.) resemble corn spurry, but they have opposite leaves and their seeds have broad wings on the margins (Frankton and Mulligan 1970).



Impacts

Agricultural: A problem of grain fields and other cropland. The weed is an alternate host for some viral diseases.

Ecological: Grows in fields and disturbed habitats, often on sandy, gravelly, or acidic soils.

Human: No information available.

Habitat and Ecology

General requirements: Tolerates dry to moderately dry conditions and is adapted to well-drained, acidic soils. Found in cultivated fields, abandoned fields, and disturbed habitats.

Distribution: Most common in coastal areas of the province, but occurs in all agricultural reporting regions. It is found throughout the Pacific Northwest states and most of Canada.

Historical: Introduced from Eurasia.

Life cycle: Plants germinate in the spring; flowering begins by June and continues through October (BC Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 1988).

Mode of reproduction: By seed.

Seed production: Each plant can produce as many as 10,000 seeds (Royer and Dickinson 1999).

Seed bank: Seeds may remain viable in the soil as long as 10 years.

Dispersal: Contaminated soils and crop plant materials

carry seeds. Seeds can also be dispersed by vehicles, humans, and animals.

Hybridization: None known.

Management

Biocontrol: None.

Mechanical: Repeated, shallow tillage can induce germination and destroy emerging seedlings. Weeds should be tilled before they set seed.

Fire: No information available.

Herbicides: Corn spurry is resistant to 2,4-D and MCPA. Dicamba and dicamba mixes are used on pastures and rangelands when the weeds are actively growing. Consult the most recent edition of BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Crop Production Guides for specific recommendations.

Before applying herbicides, read the label for full use and precautionary instructions.

Cultural/Preventive: Small infestations can be hand-pulled or hoed. Remove plants before seed-set.

Integrated Management Summary

Use clean, high-quality seed. Maintain cultivated crops and forages in a competitive condition. Prevent seed production through tillage or herbicide use.

References

BC Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. 1988. Corn spurry (*Spergula arvensis*). Weed Series Fact Sheet—Agdex 640.

Douglas, G. W., G. B. Straley, D. Meidinger, and J. Pojar, eds. 1998. *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*. Vol. 2: *Dicotyledons (Balsaminaceae through Cuscutaceae)*. Province of British Columbia.

Frankton, C., and G. Mulligan. 1970. *Weeds of Canada*. Publication 948. Ottawa: Canada Department of Agriculture.

Royer, F., and R. Dickinson. 1999. *Weeds of Canada and the Northern United States*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

