INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

African rue
(*Peganum harmala*)

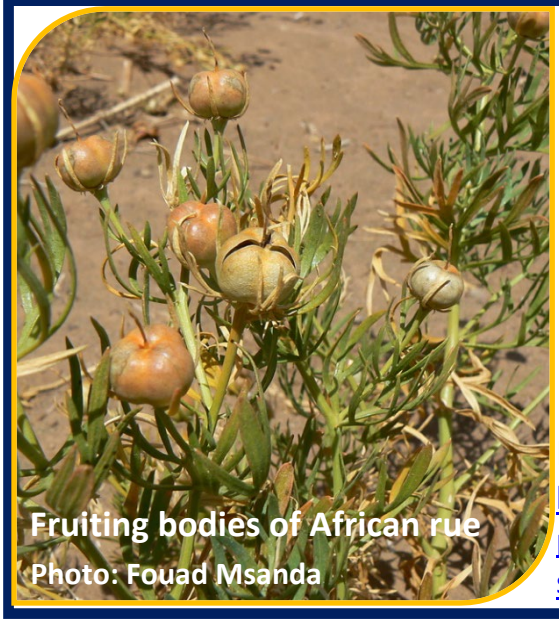
Flowering African rue bush
Photo: Fouad Msanda

Have You Seen This Plant?

Description

- Perennial, herbaceous shrub that is native to desert areas of North Africa, Southeastern Europe, and South Asia.
- Mature plants are up to 80 cm tall with branched, erect, woody, glabrous stems that die back in winter.
- Taproots can reach depths of 6 m.
- Leaves are alternate and deeply lobed into three or more linear segments.
- Leaves are bright to dark green and fleshy; along with stems, they produce an unpleasant odour when crushed.
- Flowers are solitary on 1-5 cm stalks protruding from the leaf axil.
- Flowers are 2.5 cm in diameter with 5 white, oblong petals, 5 green, linear sepals, and 15 yellow stamens.
- Dark brown to black seeds are found within three-chambered, spherical, leathery, orange-brown capsules.

Primary Threats: African rue is highly toxic when ingested. Additionally, the plant releases allelopathic compounds that change soil chemistry and inhibit the growth of surrounding plants.


Fruiting bodies of African rue
Photo: Fouad Msanda

Biology & Spread

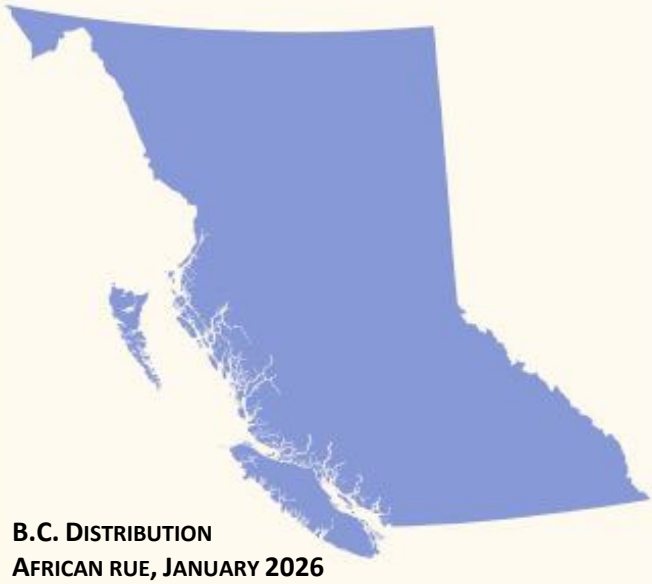
- Blooms early in the growing season.
- Prolific seed producer: a single plant can produce 60,000 seeds.
- Seeds can be distributed across great distances by animals as, they stick to feet, fur, and feathers.
- May also spread via vehicles, machinery, and contaminated hay.
- While seeds are the most common method of reproduction, African rue will readily reproduce via fragmentation, lateral root buds or resprout from residual root material not fully removed.

For more information:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species/priority-species/priority-plants

BRITISH COLUMBIA

January 2026

African rue (*Peganum harmala*)



B.C. Distribution
African rue, January 2026

Habitat

- African rue grows readily in arid and semi-arid conditions. It can be found in dry grasslands, roadsides, field edges, and degraded pastures. Able to withstand saline conditions, Africa rue can also grow in saline waste areas. It's long taproot allows it to successfully endure drought conditions.

Distribution & Status

- Regulated federally under the *Seeds Act.*
- Does not occur in BC but is present in Washington Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and the American Southwest.
- Management goal is provincial prevention.

African rue bush
Photo: Douglas Barbe

Report Invasive Species

Download the App!

www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

African rue leaves
Photo: Joseph DiTomaso

What Can You Do?

- **REPORT** all sightings
- **Observe** semi-arid and arid areas for infestations
- **Check** seed mixes
- **Monitor** livestock health
- **Act** if African rue is suspected on your land
- **Use** chemical methods to treat

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British Columbia