

Parthenium weed : An Identification Kit

(*Parthenium hysterophorus* L. – Asteraceae)

Mature Plant

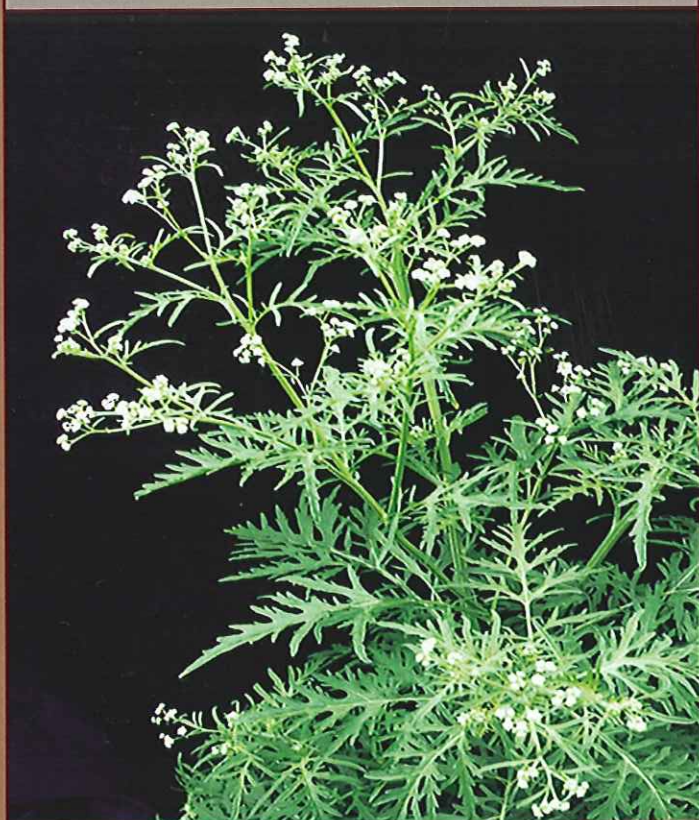
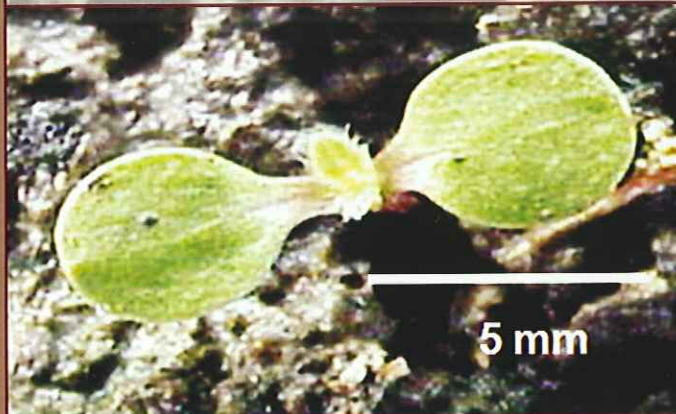


Photo: QLD Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Parthenium weed is an annual herb with a deep tap root and an erect main stem that becomes woody with age. As the plant matures, it produces many branches with flowers and may eventually reach a height of 2 meters. Under favorable conditions it can germinate, mature and set seed in 4 weeks.

Seedlings



Normally germinate in spring and early summer with the onset of rain. A young seedling showing expanded cotyledons and with the first true leaves emerging.

Flowers



Are star-shaped with a white to creamy-white appearance. Produced at the tips of the upper branches. Colour changes to light brown when seeds are mature and about to shed. Flowers have five petal-like ray florets, each bearing a single seed.

Rosette Stage



Showing radial arrangement of leaves at ground level.

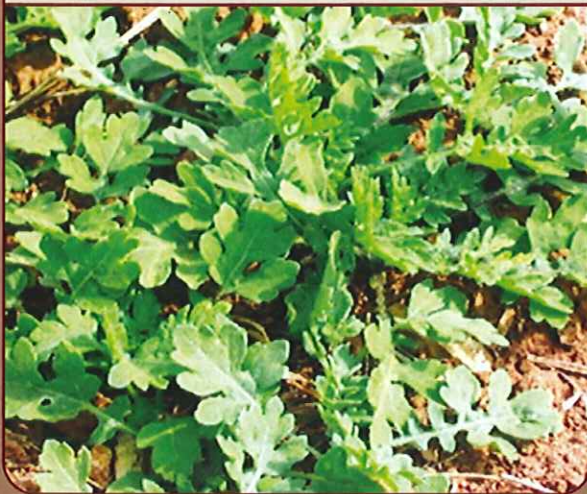
Ribbed Stem



15 mm

Mature stems are longitudinally grooved and covered with fine hairs.

Seedling Mass



Seed and Fruit



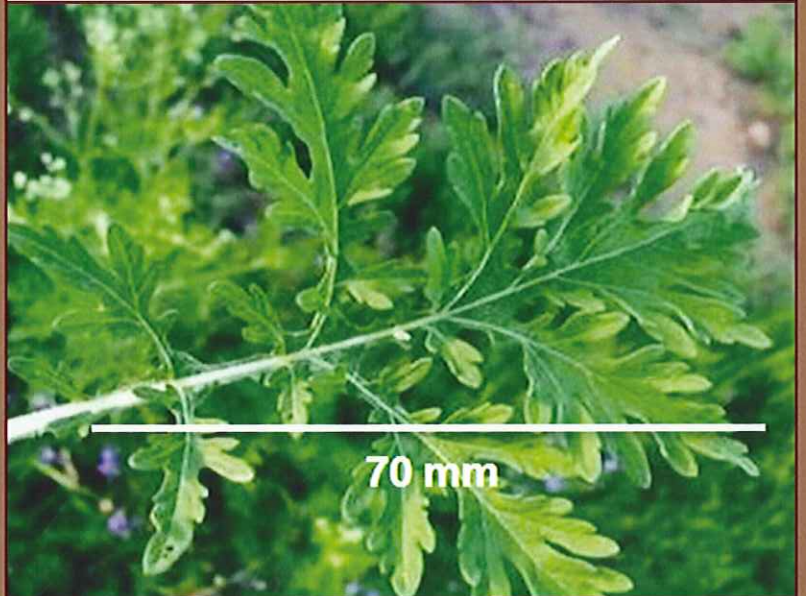
2 mm

Juvenile Leaves



A newly-emerged pubescent leaf (covered with fine hairs). Young leaves typically show prominent veins.

Mature Leaf



70 mm

A pale green and deeply-lobed lower leaf. Mature leaves are branched alternately on the stems and are less hairy than young leaves.

Seeds are flattened achenes, dark brown to black in colour with white appendages. The seeds are protected in a straw-coloured fruit covering. A single plant can produce up to 28,000 seeds which are spread by vehicles, machinery, animals, pasture and crop seed lots, stock feed, wind and water.