



Galenia Vs Atriplex: just how do you tell them apart?

In South Australia there are many weeds that look like native plants and as bushcarers I am sure we have all come across our fair share of them.

It is often difficult to tell the good from the bad when you first spot a plant you haven't seen before.

It can be even more difficult if a weed is easily mis-identified with a particular native plant.

This is why it is so important to have weeds confidently identified before removing them.

All too often our native plants are removed because a well-meaning person has incorrectly identified them as a weed.

As bushcarers we should be able to point out distinguishing features of any weed before we remove it.

The weed, *Galenia pubescens* (coastal galenia) can easily be confused with the native *Atriplex semibaccata* (berry saltbush).

Both plants can be found from coastal to mallee communities and sometimes they can be found growing side by side.

Another similar identifying feature is that both plants form mats that cover the ground with the coastal galenia forming a very dense mat over the soil surface, which prevents native species becoming established.

The berry saltbush is not quite so dense.

How can you tell them apart?

The most reliable feature to distinguish between the two plants is their flower.

Galenia pubescens has small conventional flowers about 2 – 3mm wide with small white petals often marked with a pink tinge.

You may find one with a yellow tinge; this will be *Galenia secunda* another weed simply referred to as a *Galenia*.

The native species, *Atriplex semibaccata* has separate male and female flowers without any petals at all.

Both plants flower most times of the year, depending on local conditions, but the most important difference is that the *Atriplex* produces a succulent red berry, which can be up to 5mm long.

There are other differences between the plants.

Galenia tends to have numerous small, white hairs covering both sides of the leaf, whereas the *Atriplex* is almost hairless on the top of the leaf and scaly beneath.

Galenia has a thicker stem, which is almost woody in appearance and touch whereas the *Atriplex* is a finer plant with slender stems only.

How to rid your site of *Galenia*

As with all bushland weeds, start where the weeds are fewest in number.

Selective control can be done around individual native plants using spot regeneration which protects single plants surrounded by weeds.

You can even work on the land just off your site to prevent the weeds becoming established on your site.

It may be necessary to ask adjoining landholders permission if you want to go onto private property.

Once you have confidently identified the weed as *Galenia*, smaller specimens can be pulled by hand.

If the plant is large it can be carefully rolled back to expose the taproot, which can then be cut below the soil surface with a sharp knife.

The plant can then be hung up to dry. Plants can also be sprayed with Glyphosate™.

Galenia is a weed that is easily treated over the warmer months.

If you choose to remove larger *Galenia* weeds at this time of year avoid hand pulling as the dry soil will result in too much soil disturbance.

During the summer months it should only be sprayed with Glyphosate™ if the plant is lush and green.

Glyphosate™ is less absorbant when the plant is dry and stressed and more effective on a healthier specimen.

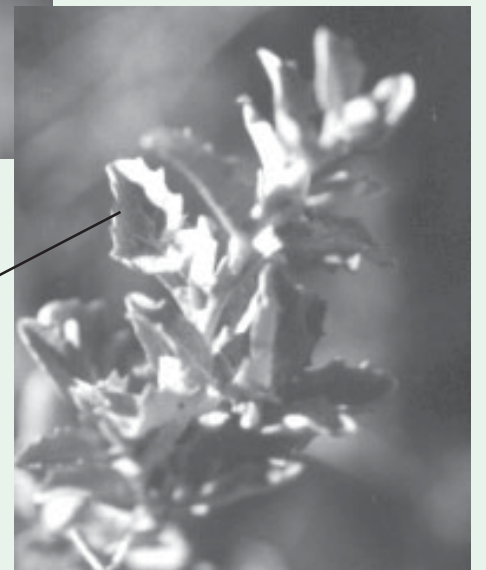
Summer rain can stimulate germination of seed and these small seedlings can be hand pulled with minimal disturbance to the soil.

And remember, if unsure always check. Please don't remove anything you cannot confidently identify.

Peter Tucker
Bushcare Support Officer



Note Atriplex has red berries



No fine hairs to be found on Atriplex leaves and leaf shapes vary between plants



Fine white hairs can be found on the leaf of a Galenia.

Galenia has a small conventional flower (white with pink tinge) to 3mm diameter.

