

BIO-HAZARD

Mimosa pigra

Mimosa pigra (Sensitive plant), a native of Central and South America, is a widespread weed throughout Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and has become a threat to the biodiversity of a number of Australian National Parks. Occurring primarily in moist areas, especially riverine areas, *M. pigra* forms dense impenetrable thickets, affecting animal movement and regeneration of indigenous vegetation.

Identification

Description:

A shrub with a height of up to 6m (usually 2m). The stems are armed with thorns of up to 7mm long.

Leaves:

The leaves are bipinnate with an erect spine forming at the junction of each of the 6-14 pairs of pinnae. The leaves are also very sensitive to touch hence the name "sensitive plant".

Flowers:

Flower heads are round fluffy balls consisting of up to 100 small pink to mauve coloured flowers.

Fruits:

Each flower head produces a cluster of 10 to 20 seedpods, 6 to 8cm long. The pods turn brown when mature and break into segments.



Figure 1: Mimosa pigra flower



(Above) The typical bipinnate (compound), sensitive leaves. Note the spines present below each petiole.

Figure 2: Mimosa pigra leaves

Damage

M. pigra forms dense thickets, making areas inaccessible to animals and man and displacing indigenous vegetation.

Control

Small mimosa plants can be uprooted, while larger plants require treatment through herbicide application. Follow up is essential due to mimosa seeds remaining in the soil for long periods of time. Bio-control is under investigation.

Contact address

Please report any sightings of *Mimosa pigra* in and adjacent to the Kruger National Park to:

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