

Pasture Weed Watch

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

PGG Wrightson

MALLOW

Why is it a weed?

Competes with desirable plants and has a tendency to dominate paddocks in drier areas.

Where is it found?

Nationwide

Is it toxic?

Slightly toxic to animals.

Alternative uses?

It can be eaten as a leafy vegetable, some species are used to make dyes, some species are grown as ornamental plants.



MILTON MUNRO

My wife and I recently celebrated our ninth wedding anniversary, and what better way to celebrate than to ditch the junior agronomists with the grandparents and grab some quality time. We ended up spending an extended weekend in Akaroa, sailing, dolphin experiences, great food and even better wine. We had a blast!

I also managed to get in a little weed spotting on some of our many walks and one weed in particular caught my wife's eye. It has a very striking purple flower and apparently would look nice in our garden. Sigh. There is no escaping the allure of a pretty flower.

The plant she liked was a mallow, the common name given to approximately 30 members of the Malva species. They're a hardy group of plants that have effectively colonised most the world and are found everywhere in New Zealand, most

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commonly on road sides, in orchards, drier areas and waste lands.

In New Zealand the most common weed varieties are the small flowered mallow, the dwarf mallow, the French mallow and the large flowered mallow. Most mallow species are edible (although animals won't eat them) with younger leaves making a great lettuce substitute, while older leaves and stems can be boiled or steamed.

One exciting mallow fact for you all: did you know that the colour mauve (a soft purple) is actually named after the French name for the mallow?

Identifying mallows can be an easy job and a very difficult job. It's easy to determine if a plant is a mallow, but which mallow is it? That takes some skill so we are just going to focus on identifying mallows as a whole. They're generally short-lived perennials; if conditions are good they will live for a few years, if conditions are poor they behave a bit more like an annual or a biennial. Mallows usually creep along the ground (although some do stand upright), and usually only reach a height of around 20-30cm.

But it's the foliage that really give the mallow away, looking very similar to deep green geranium leaves that alternate along the stem. They produce a large number of 0.5-5cm diameter flowers that



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are usually purple but occasionally some species can be white.

HOW TO CONTROL MALLOW

Controlling mallow can be a little tricky. In the home garden they can be effectively pulled out manually.

In pastures, gardens and orchards it gets a bit harder. There are no good selective herbicides to control mallow. In pastures, seedling mallows can be controlled with Preside and larger plants can be controlled with Victory Gold. Glyphosate is not very effective and it's better to use Buster or spike your glyphosate with Hammer. n