



CUT-LEAVED GERANIUM

Photo: Olivier Pichard Wikimedia Commons

WHY IS IT A WEED

Spreads easily

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Open spaces, disturbed fertile soil, hedges, sunny bank edges

IS IT TOXIC?

No

THERE ARE THREE weeds that are often mistaken for each other. Last month we looked at the first in this trilogy, dove's foot.

This month it's a close relative, cut-leaved geranium, also from the geranium family (*Geraniaceae*) but native to Europe. It's similar to dove's foot in many ways, having been introduced to other continents and now considered a noxious weed or an invasive species across many of them, particularly North America.

This plant establishes easily, with the ability to quickly germinate in open spaces, along banks and hedges, and it even successfully competes with pasture.

Cut-leaved geranium can flourish in most soil types in New Zealand. The more fertile or greater the topsoil, the better the chance of this weed popping up.

Cut-leaved geranium is a hairy, annual plant, and can grow up to 60cm in height, taller than dove's foot. The leaves of the plant are deeply-



Photo: Muriel Benzel Wikimedia Commons

divided, almost completely to the base, with hermaphrodite mauve flowers approximately 12-18mm across and five petals making them slightly bigger but lighter in colour than dove's foot. The seeds ripen in beaked pods, opening in curls from the base to expose the seeds.

How to control cut-leaved geranium

There are a wide range of options available to eradicate the weed depending on your situation.

Glyphosate is a good starting point, particularly prior to working vegetable gardens up for the planting season.

If you are attempting to remove it from your pasture, sometimes it is beneficial to add what we call a 'spike' to the mix to ensure control.

Always read the label. For specific information, make sure you talk to an expert to get the best advice for controlling it.

WHAT YOUR SOIL CAN TELL YOU

When we look at the rooting depth of a weed, the most limiting factors are determined by the root's ability to propagate through the soil, tapping into both major and minor nutrients required. If your land has a sub-soil compaction pan – a tight section of the soil beneath the top layer – then the ability for any plant to develop roots down into the profile is much more difficult. Similarly, if you have a wet paddock or lawn, my preference is to always dig a hole and have a look. There are a number of soil characteristics that can be contributing to a weed burden, and subsoil compaction might be one of them.

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