



Mallow

Why is it a weed?

Competes with more desirable species such as ryegrass and clover

Where is it found?

All over New Zealand

Is it toxic?

Some cases reported overseas but nothing recorded in New Zealand – caution required

Other uses

Young leaves of some species can be added raw to salads

THERE ARE six common species of the mallow family (*Malva spp*) found in New Zealand.

Creeping mallow, *Modiola caroliniana*

Found nationwide, forms very low, creeping 'mats', smothering pasture. Orange-red coloured flowers, 5-10mm across, with five petals.

Dwarf mallow, *Malva neglecta*

Found throughout the North Island, and in eastern areas of the South Island. Hairy stems and leaves (especially leaf undersides).

French mallow, *Malva nicaeensis*

Found throughout the North Island, and in Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury, Otago. Similar to dwarf mallow but mature plants are hairless.



Creeping mallow.

Photo: Harry Reese Wikimedia Commons



Dwarf mallow.

Large-flowered mallow, *Malva sylvestris*

Commonly found throughout the North Island (except for Taranaki). Most common in parts of the Waikato, Poverty Bay, and Hawkes Bay, occasionally occurs in Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury, Otago, and the Chatham Islands. Can grow up to 120cm tall, large flowers up to 4cm across, leaves up to 15cm in diameter.

Small-flowered mallow, *Malva parviflora*

Nationwide, except Westland and Fiordland, grows up to 50cm high, flowers are pale mauve to white.

Tree mallow, *Malva arborea*

Found nationwide, grows up to 2m tall when flowering.



Large-flowered mallow.

How to control mallow

There isn't much you can do, other than pulling the plants out by hand and keeping pasture and soil in good condition, to prevent it germinating.

There are no specific selective herbicides for mallow control, although sprays containing flumetsulam (sold as Headstart or Valdo) remove small seedlings without harming clover and grass.

Another option is spot spraying with a mix containing dicamba/2,4-D (sold as Banvine) or a mix of triclopyr/picloram (sold as Conquest or Victory Gold). These can work well on larger plants, but will kill clover and can be damaging to other 'good' pasture plants.

Always follow the label, use pesticides wisely, and ask for advice from a technical specialist.



Small-flowered mallow.

Photo: Forest and Kim Starr

About Gary

Gary Bosley works as PGG Wrightson's North Island technical specialist in agronomy. He and his family live on a 4ha lifestyle block south-east of Auckland.

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