



# PARSLEY PIERT

## WHY IS IT A WEED?

Germinates easily in pasture and lawn

## WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Predominately in your lawn

## IS IT TOXIC?

Not from my experience; does have some medicinal uses



**THE LAST IN MY TRILOGY** of very similar-looking weeds is parsley piert (*Aphanes inexpectata*), a freely-branched winter annual. It's very similar in looks to the weeds I've covered in the last two issues: dove's foot (October) and cut-leaved geranium (November).

This broadleaf weed germinates in the autumn, is relatively winter-active, and can be very hard to see in your lawn. It then produces seed in spring. If you then get a dry summer, it can and will quickly invade thinned-out areas.

It's a member of the rose (*Rosaceae*) family and is found all over Europe, where it's also commonly known as field lady or colickwort. The name *Aphanes* comes from a Greek word meaning 'unseen' or 'unnoticed', and it's apt for this weed.

Unfortunately the name parsley piert doesn't have anything to do with parsley, although 17th century herbalist Mr Nicholas Culpeper did recommend using it in salads. However, I've found if you

walk out onto your lawn to collect some for a salad, it may take you a long time to get a sufficient amount because it's so hard to spot.

This plant has the ability to quickly germinate in open spaces or bare ground, along banks, hedges and waste areas, but it's most prevalent in pasture and turf. Parsley piert can establish in most soil types, enjoying a pH range of 4-7.5, and quickly forms a tight, low-growing mat.

Like the other two weeds in this trilogy, it can be hard to distinguish at first glance. Parsley piert has leaves that can measure up to 12mm long, 4-10mm wide, consisting of three leaflets, with each leaflet divided into three deeply-cut lobes. The plant produces tiny green flowers at the base but no petals.

Leaf identification can be very hard if you're looking at dove's foot and parsley piert. It's height of the plant that will reveal which one you're looking at (dove's foot is tall, parsley piert stays low). ♦

## The fabulous story of parsley piert's medicinal benefits

The 'piert' part of the name comes from the French word *perce-pierre* meaning 'stone piercer'. This was given to the plant because of its ability to establish in shallow soil and emerge between stones. As a result, it was assumed that the plant had the ability to pierce stones and had a medicinal use for breaking up stones in the bladder and kidneys. Not true!

## How to manage parsley piert

If you are attempting to remove it from your lawn, you can try harvesting it. Otherwise, it's going to survive due to its low growing height as you won't be able to mow it off.

It tolerates a range of herbicides used selectively for turf so it's rarely controlled by MCPA or 2, 4-D-based products.

The only two effective products that I know work are Image (a mixture of lonxynil, Bromoxynil and Mecoprop) or Victory Gold (mixture of Picloram and Triclopyr).

As always, read the label. For specific information for your region, talk to your local rural supply store representative to get the best advice for controlling parsley piert on your property.



**STEPHANIE SLOAN** grew up on a sheep and beef farm in the Wairarapa. She is now part of PGG Wrightson's agronomy team, identifying weeds on a daily basis.

