

WEED FILE: MALLOWS

REVISED: DECEMBER 2016

Tall Buggers:

- Tree mallow (*Malva arborea*)
- Cretan mallow (*Malva linnaei*)

Creeping Chaps:

- Small-flowered mallow (*Malva parviflora*)
- Dwarf mallow (*Malva neglecta*)
- Creeping mallow (*Modiola caroliniana*)

Intermediate Bloke:

- Large-flowered mallow (*Malva sylvestris*)

DESCRIPTION

Mallows are common weeds around the world, with quite a few varieties being well represented in NZ. Strictly speaking, mallows are all from the *Malva* genus, but there are also some non-*Malva* species that we commonly refer to as mallows, just because we all enjoy confusion and contradiction so much. One of those, creeping mallow (*Modiola caroliniana*), is included in this weed file.

The name *Malva* derives from a Greek word for 'soft or soothing', though mallows aren't all that soothing when they invade your lucerne paddocks.

LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Mallows can be annuals, biennials and perennials. If conditions are favourable to them, most mallows will behave as short-lived perennials, meaning they'll live for several years, but if conditions aren't so accommodating the mallows will behave as annuals (1 year lifecycle) or biennials (2 years) instead.

VISUAL COMPARISONS

Some species are tall and erect (**tree mallow** – grows to 2M tall), some are small and spreading (**dwarf mallow** – less than 50cm

high), and some are in between (**large-flowered mallow** – 1.2M tall).

One thing that the mallows do have in common is the shape of the leaf, which in all species is distinctly 'geranium-like' in appearance.

The size of the leaves does vary, generally in proportion to the overall size of the particular species of mallow, but the distinctive rounded shape of the leaf, with shallow lobes, is fairly similar in all species, as can be seen from the photographs. The leaves of mallows also tend to have a 'folded' appearance, as if they've been creased along the main rib.

Mallow flowers, however, vary quite a bit in appearance, size and colour:

- **Tree mallow** has vivid lilac or deep pink bell-shaped flowers, 40mm in diameter, appearing from August to May.
- **Cretan mallow** flowers are softer, pastel coloured, less than 20mm in diameter, and deeply divided into five distinctive 'petals'.
- **Small-flowered mallow** produces pale mauve to white flowers, very small in size (not surprising, given the name) at 5mm diameter, with five petals. Note in the pictures the very small flower size in comparison to its leaf size. It flowers from September to April.
- **Dwarf mallow** has near white flowers, with some highlights in lilac, and the petals are considerably larger than the small-flowered species, at 20-30mm diameter.
- **Creeping mallow** has orange flowers, growing singly on short stalks, and having a diameter of about 15mm. It flowers from October to March.
- **Large-flowered mallow** has, again not unexpectedly, larger flowers at 40mm diameter than most of the other mallows. They are deep pink to red and appear in clusters of two to ten flowers. The five petals are each deeply notched at the outer end, creating a 'ten-pointed' flower appearance. Flowering occurs from November to April.

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

Mallows occur throughout NZ, though not every species grows everywhere. Small-flowered

mallow is probably the most common, and large-flowered mallow the most conspicuous. The preferred habitat is bare ground, waste areas, stock yards and camps, and roadsides. Mallows will establish in pasture especially in bare patches, in horticultural blocks, and in arable crops. Mallows can be a serious problem in lucerne crops, because most of the usual herbicides safe to use over standing lucerne don't control mallows well.

TOXICITY

Mallows are not readily eaten by stock because the leaves (at least of some species) are mildly toxic. In Australia, staggers in sheep is associated with both small-flowered and creeping mallow species.

HERBICIDE CONTROL

Orchards and Vineyards:

- **GA200** at 1-2L/100L water applied by handgun or knapsack. Add 100ml **SprayWetter** per 100L water.

In pasture and lucerne, the best results will come from spraying when the mallow is in the seedling stage where possible. Successful spot spraying can be done at any stage of the mallow's growth.

Spot Spraying:

- **GrassMate** at 60ml/10L of water. Add **SuperWetter** at 10ml/10L water for best results. This will be grass friendly, but will damage clover.
- **MSF600** at 1g/10L of water. Add **SuperWetter** at 10ml/10L water for best results. This option is inexpensive and very effective, but will damage both grass and clover; the grass will recover moderately soon, but the clover may take several months.

Crops and Pasture:

- **Decision** at 50g/Ha by boom or rosette spray. (Add **SuperWetter** at 100ml/100L water for best results). In lucerne, use of **Decision** at this rate will provide good control (kill) of seedling mallows, and will suppress larger mallows sufficiently to permit the lucerne to be cut.



WEED FILE:
MALLOWS



CREeping MALLOW



DWARF MALLOW



SMALL-FLOWERED MALLOW



CRETAN MALLOW



LARGE-FLOWERED MALLOW



TREE MALLOW

