

**WEED FILE:**

**SHEPHERD'S PURSE**



*Capsella bursa-pastoris*

**DESCRIPTION**

Shepherd's purse is a small short-lived annual weed found throughout New Zealand. It germinates readily at most times of the year, including in winter if the growing conditions are at all reasonable and moisture is sufficient. Because of this ability Shepherd's purse can thrive in conditions where the growth of other competitive summer annuals is inhibited, and thus it can often become more noticeable in winter.

The plant initially takes the form of a small rosette, growing quite flat to the ground, and because the leaves at that stage are variable in form it can be difficult to identify it as Shepherd's purse in the vegetative stage. The rosettes tend to be only 10-15cm in diameter.

However, the plant does soon put up a tall flower stem from the centre of the rosette, and this will usually reach 20-30cm in height, making the weed easier to see and identify. The stems form into several spreading branches, and support small white flowers of about 3mm diameter, each with four small petals. Flowering is usually seen from September to January.

The flowers are followed by the formation down the upper parts of the stems of large numbers of seed pods, which are heart-shaped (or purse-shaped, if one can imagine a shepherd carrying a purse). These pods split when ripe to release large numbers of the plant's very small brownish seeds.

**HABITAT**

Shepherd's purse appears most commonly

in cultivated ground, crops, gardens, waste areas and on bare ground. The plant is susceptible to white rust fungus, with which it is often infected.

**HERBAL REMEDY**

Shepherd's purse is said by herbal lore to be an efficient way to stop bleeding, both externally and internally. It is also said to be a traditional remedy for jaundice, when tied to the wrists or the soles of the feet. Rainbow & Brown makes no warranties about the efficacy of these remedial uses of the plant, especially the one about tying bunches of it about your wrists and feet. But if you do, please send us a picture for the newsletter.

**HERBICIDE CONTROL**

Shepherd's purse is tolerant or resistant to several common herbicides, and is particularly resistant to most of the selective types including picloram, clopyralid and dicamba.

However, it is controlled well by some of the rather simpler (and less costly) herbicides.

**Spot Treatment**

Individual plants are easily killed by the most common of non-selective herbicides:

- **Glyphosate** at 100ml/10L water, plus 10ml **SprayWetter** penetrant.

**Spraying in Crops & Pasture**

- **MCPA750** at 1.5L/Ha plus 100ml of **SprayWetter** penetrant per 100L water.

Note: Cultivation will also readily kill existing Shepherd's purse plants.

