

## Help needed to locate toxic weed

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is calling on residents in and around Balingup to help search for a poisonous weed recently found in the area.

**The plant, including the leaves and berries, should not be eaten or handled. Instead contact DPIRD immediately.**

Called Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), this declared plant has never been found in Western Australia before. It is likely to have made its way to WA from other states where it is established. It is toxic to both humans and animals, is an environmental weed, and can affect agricultural activities by contaminating produce.

The weed has been found on several rural properties, including a pine plantation, and along roadsides. DPIRD has set up a task force to search all potential sites. The task force includes the Forest Products Commission, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Main Roads and the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup.

The involvement of locals can help get more eyes on the ground, and improve chances of finding every plant. The goal is to eradicate the incursion before there is further spread.

Summer is the ideal time for identifying the plant, as it carries distinctive purple-black berries, and it is important to remove the weed before seed set. Seeds can survive in the soil for a long period and can also be spread by birds.

Check the information at the department website [agric.wa.gov.au/pokeweed](http://agric.wa.gov.au/pokeweed) to see what the weed looks like. Keep in mind it is a large plant that can grow up to 2.5m.

If you suspect you have seen pokeweed, take photos and make a report to the department by using the MyPestGuide™ Reporter app, or contact the department's Pest and Disease Information Service on 9368 3080 or email [padis@dpiird.wa.gov.au](mailto:padis@dpiird.wa.gov.au)

### Pokeweed description

- Similar to inkweed, a widespread weed in the South West, but Pokeweed is taller with larger leaves and drooping berry stalks.
- Grows up to 2.5 metres tall, with bright green leaves (up to 40cm long) on a smooth purplish stem.
- White to magenta flowers and deep purple-black berries.
- Leaves have an unpleasant odour when crushed.