

W.5 WILLOW-HERB/WILGERKRUID

(*Ludwigia stolonifera* (Guill. & Perr.) Raven)

Family: Onagraceae

(Compiled by the Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria)

A spreading, rooted, perennial plant growing in swamps and on the banks of rivers or other water bodies. Its long, trailing, reddish-brown stems are often buoyed up by bunches of white or pink, spindle-shaped floats. The shiny, dark green and narrowly lance-shaped leaves are about 60 mm long, have smooth margins and are placed singly at different heights on the stem. Flowers are about 20 to 30 mm across and have five yellow petals. They are borne singly in the axils of the upper leaves.



The hard, cylindrical fruit capsules are 10 to 30 mm long and split open to release many small seeds.

Related species

Willow-herb can be distinguished from the seven other species of *Ludwigia* in the region by its white to pale pink, spindle-shaped floats and its dark green, shiny leaves.

Distribution

It is found from the Transkei northwards throughout the moister regions of Africa and the Near East.

Ecology

Willow-herb grows in mud and in still to slow-flowing shallow water in swamps, pans, dams and rivers. Plants growing in mud have smaller leaves than those growing in water. It is often found together with water lilies (*Nymphaea* species).

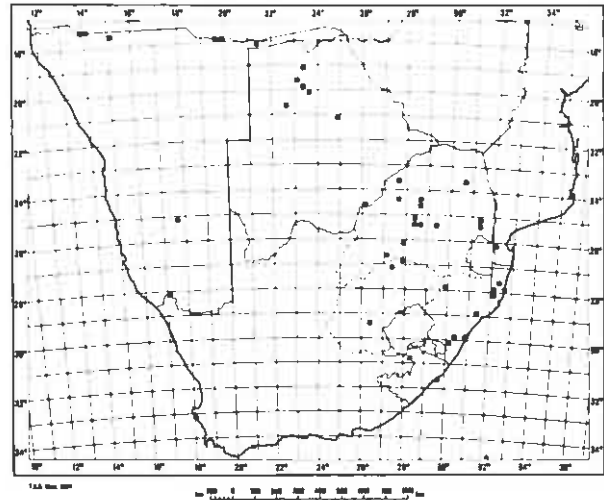


Importance

When growing in dense masses, willow-herb contributes to silting-up and may interfere with fishing and boating. The seeds are eaten by waterfowl.

Legislation and control

There is no legislation for the control of willow-herb. For control measures see Steyn, Scott, Ashton & Vivier (1979).



Notes

The scientific name commemorates C.G. Ludwig, a professor of medicine in Leipzig around 1740; *stolonifera* = bearing stolons.

Species Number: 5793.000-00400

Literature

- RAVEN, P.H., 1963. The Old World species of *Ludwigia* (including *Jussiaea*), with a synopsis of the genus (Onagraceae). *Reinwardtia* 6: 327-427.
- STEYN, D.J., SCOTT, W.E., ASHTON, P.J. & VIVIER, F.S., 1979. *Guide to the use of herbicides on aquatic plants*. Technical Report No. TR 95. Pretoria: Department of Water Affairs.