

Category C—Low

California burclover (*Medicago polymorpha*)

Identification and Impacts



Photo credit: G. McDonald



Photo credit: K. A. Rawlins



Photo Credit: J. Viola

Navajo Name
Tł'oh azee

Origin
Native to the Mediterranean region.

Description
California burclover, despite its name, is a non-native annual legume. It grows from numerous prostrate stems that spread outward 6 to 20 inches. The leaves are clover-like in appearance, are wedge-shaped and toothed at the top. They have smooth surfaces. Plants have only a few small yellow pea-like flowers. The fruit is a flattened, coiled pod about 1/4 inch wide with a double row of hooked spines that spiral around the outside of the pod. Individual plants can develop more than 1,000 pods (NRCS 2006)



Photo credit: Forest and Kim Starr

Biology
Burclover germinates in the fall and matures in early summer. It is adapted to mild winters and hot summers. It is well adapted to a wide range of soil conditions, but prefers loamy soils. It can grow in full sun to heavy shade and it is tolerant of alkaline soils (NRCS 2006). It prefers disturbed sites, pastures, roadsides and vacant lots.

Locations
It has been detected in Canyon de Chelly in Canyon del Muerto.

Ecological Threat and Management Concerns
California burclover was initially used as a cover crop and was sometimes added to livestock feed. However, it can grow fast and displace more preferred native vegetation. It can also affect agricultural sites and can be a contaminant in hay or feed. As a prolific seed producer, burclover should be managed for a few years to ensure populations are controlled.

Key ID Tips

- Small pea-like flowers
- Small, flattened seed pods with double rows of hooked spikes spiraled on the outside.
- Wedge-shaped leaves with toothed edges at the top.

Category C—Low

California burclover (*Medicago polymorpha*)

Additional safety measures and limitations may apply for each method. Refer to the [Navajo Nation Integrated Weed Management Plan](#) for more information.

Mechanical/Manual Removal

Mowing and cutting can be effective when paired with other control methods. Hand pulling is recommended for small populations and shallow tilling is an effective control method, especially in agricultural fields.

Biological

No biological control organisms are available.

Cultural Control

Targeted grazing is not recommended as disturbance can stimulate germination and resprouting. However, burclover is not harmful to livestock and is used as feed in some instances. Burning is only partially effective and can stimulate resprouting. Monitoring of post-fire conditions is essential.

Chemical

Use of herbicides can be effective. Refer to the product labels for information application rates, timing, and approved application methods.

Recommended herbicides include:

- 2,4-D
- Glyphosate
- Indaziflam

References

DiTomaso, J.M., G.B. Keyser et al. 2013. *Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States*. Weed Research and Information Center, University of California. 544 pp.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). 2006. Plant Fact Sheet: Burclover. 2 pp. Available online at <http://plants.usda.gov>.



Bureau of Indian Affairs
 Navajo Region
 301 West Hill Street
 Gallup, NM 87301
 Phone: (505) 863-8314
www.bia.gov/regional-offices/Navajo-region