Department of Plant Sciences

ARROWLEAF SIDA/PRICKLY SIDA

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Arrowleaf Sida, *Sida rhombifolia L.*
Prickly Sida, *Sida spinosa L.*

Classification and Description

Arrowleaf sida, also known as ironweed (not to be confused with tall ironweed) is an erect, summer annual herb. Prickly sida, also an erect, summer annual herb, is more commonly known as false-mallow, Indian mallow, spiny sida or teaweed. Both arrowleaf and prickly sida are members of the mallow (Malvaceae) family and are native to North America. They can be found throughout Tennessee. Both weeds can grow as tall as 3 1/3 feet (Fig. 1), and can be found in areas such as cultivated fields, pastures and roadsides.

Figure 1. Both weeds can grow as tall as 3 1/3 feet.

Seedlings can be differentiated by the serrations on the leaves. Arrowleaf sida only has serrations on half of the leaf margins, whereas prickly sida has serration along the entire leaf (Fig. 2). Leaves of both species are arranged alternately. Leaves of arrowleaf sida are diamond shaped, 1/2 to 3 inches long and 1/4 to 1 inch wide. Prickly sida

Figure 2. Arrowleaf sida (left), Prickly sida (right).

leaves are oval shaped, 3/4 to 2 inches long and 1/4 to 3/4 inches wide. Both plants have short, spine-like projections at the base of the leaves (Fig. 3) and a pale yellow flower (Fig. 4).

Figure 3. Both plants have short, spine-like projections at the base of the leaves.

Figure 4. Both plants have pale yellow flowers.

Problems in Pastures and Hay Fields

Both weeds are common in areas of pastures where grass is lacking or thin due to over-grazing or heavy animal traffic. They will show up along field roads through pastures and hay fields and around feeding areas and areas where cattle spend much time resting. Thin stands of grass provide little competition, thus allowing the weeds to flourish. Both species are often problematic in horse pastures, which are often over-grazed (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Arrowleaf sida with no grass.

Management in Pastures and Hay Fields

As is the case with all other weeds, prevention is an integral part of an overall management plan. Healthy, competitive stands of grass will provide competition, thus making establishment of new weed seedlings more difficult. Rotational grazing, periodically moving hay rings, and spot treatment of problem areas will reduce the spread of arrowleaf and prickly sida throughout pastures. Mowing established plants is difficult due to woody stems; this is why arrowleaf sida is often called ironweed. Timely herbicide applications are required to effectively control arrowleaf and prickly sida. To be adequately controlled, they must be sprayed before exceeding 3 inches tall. Few herbicides provide good control of arrowleaf/prickly sida. A herbicide containing aminopyralid such as ForeFront R&P HL / GrazonNext HL (aminopyralid + 2,4-D) or Chaparral (aminopyralid + metsulfuron) is required for adequate control. Producers are encouraged to scout infested areas in mid-spring to watch for emergence of seedlings and make plans to spray.

Prior to application of any herbicide, be sure to thoroughly read and understand the herbicide label, and follow all directions and precautions. Also, remember that practicing good herbicide stewardship is everyone's responsibility. For more information on herbicide stewardship, please visit our website: herbicidestewardship.com.

References

Bryson, C. T. & DeFelice, M. S. (2009). Weeds of the South. Athens: University of Georgia Press. 468 pp.

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