

Weeds to look out for in coco peat growing media

A guide for plant producers

From time to time, new weeds come into the country in imported growing media.

MPI published a guide on weeds to look out for in coco peat in 2008. Some of these weeds have been intercepted again in 2026 in nurseries, as well as some further species.

If you use imported coco peat as part of your growing media, keep an eye out for these species and remove them from growing containers before they spread.

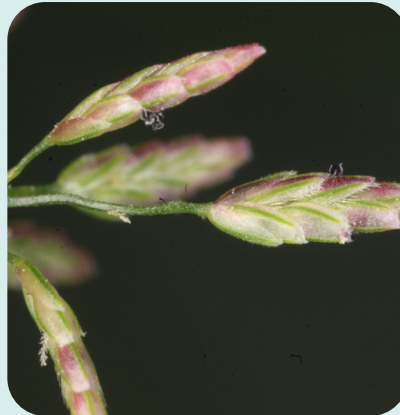


All photos courtesy of Dr. Trevor James



Eragrostis amabilis (formerly *Eragrostis tenella*)

Grass



Characteristics:

- Slender, tufted annual grass up to 30cm tall
- Leaves narrow and usually hairless
- Leaf sheaths have long hairs, especially near the top
- Flower head open and delicate, with fine branching
- Spikelets small, oblong to oval, often pale green to purplish
- Mature spikelets break apart readily and release seed

Cleome viscosa

Herb



Characteristics:

- Upright to scrambling, sticky-hairy, foetid herb
- Leaves composed of three to five leaflets with both surfaces covered with sticky, glandular hairs
- Stems round with many sticky glandular hairs
- Flowers yellow with four, upwards pointing petals
- Fruit are long hairy pods

Oldenlandia corymbosa

Herb



Characteristics:

- Low growing herb
- Leaves linear with few short hairs, opposite and without stems, but with prominent stipules
- Stem mottled brown with few short hairs
- Flowers tubular, with four petals, white with ring of hairs in the throat of the tube

Parthenium hysterophorus

Herb



Handling note:

Wear gloves when handling suspected parthenium weed. Contact with the plant or pollen may cause allergic dermatitis in susceptible people.



Characteristics:

- Unwanted organism in NZ
- Annual herbs that begins as a low basal rosette, then develops upright, much-branches stems
- Leaves pale green, hairy and deeply divided, giving a fern-like appearance
- Stems green, ribbed lengthwise and covered in short stiff hairs
- Numerous tiny white to cream flower heads, about 4 to 5mm across, form at the ends of branches
- Each flower head produces several small dark seeds. Remove before flowering or seed set.

Dactyloctenium aegyptium

Grass



Characteristics:

- Low growing, mat forming stoloniferous grass
- Leaves short, broad and sparsely hairy
- Leaf sheath striated and hairy, sometimes red tinged
- Ligule membranous with hairy rim
- Distinctive seed head with several short, finger-like spikes radiating from one point



If you find a suspect weed



Check growing containers regularly.
Remove unusual weeds before they flower or set seed.

1. Stop them spreading

Isolate the affected container or batch

2. Photograph it

Take clear photos of the whole plant, leaves, stems, flowers or seed heads, and include something for scale

3. Remove it carefully

Remove suspect weeds before they flower or set seed. Bag plant material so seeds are not spread through the nursery

4. Report anything unusual

If the weed is unusual or you suspect it is exotic, contact Biosecurity New Zealand on **0800 80 99 66**