



Common Heliotrope

(*Heliotropium europaeum*)

STATUS IN TASMANIA

Common heliotrope has recently been detected in Tasmania for the first time. It is a declared weed under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* due to its toxicity to livestock. The toxin affects cattle, sheep, and horses. Common heliotrope is suspected to have arrived via contaminated animal feed containing seed.

Common heliotrope is native to Central Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa. Common Heliotrope is widely naturalised in all mainland Australian States and Territories, excluding the Northern Territory.



INaturalist Australia, Photographer fobhm, 2021

Identification

Height: Up to 50 cm

Stems: Grey-green, rough to the touch

Leaves:

- Grey-green, oval-shaped, alternating along stems
- Covered in fine hairs (especially on the bottom of leaves)
- Emit a strong, unpleasant smell when crushed

Flowers:

- Tubular, five white petals with yellow throats
- Arranged in two rows on the upper side of a curved spike (5–7 cm long)
- Appear singly or in pairs at branch ends

Fruit:

- Group of four brown nutlets, each containing one seed
- Nutlets have a rough surface and can attach to wool and animal fur

Roots:

- Slender, with an extensively branched taproot, reaching up to 1 metre deep

Growth and Reproduction

- Common heliotrope germinates in late spring and summer when moisture is present
- Flowering and seeding continues during the summer months. Plants are frost sensitive and die off after the first frosts in April or May
- Seed dispersal occurs when burrs attach to the wool and fur of livestock. Burrs can become attached through contact with flood water and contaminated fodder.



INaturalist Australia, photographer kirstenc, 2020

Biosecurity and Management

Due to its **toxicity** and ability to **spread rapidly**, common heliotrope poses a serious

biosecurity threat.

Early **detection, containment, and prevention of further spread** are essential. Landowners and stock managers should keep an eye out for new infestations and report sightings to Biosecurity Tasmania.



INaturalist Australia, photographer mhewish, 2025

Report Sightings

If you suspect that you have seen or have common heliotrope on your property, **contact Biosecurity Tasmania on:**

- **Phone:** 03 6165 3777
- **Email:** invasivespecies@nre.tas.gov.au

Or make a report online at [Report Invasive Species](#).

