



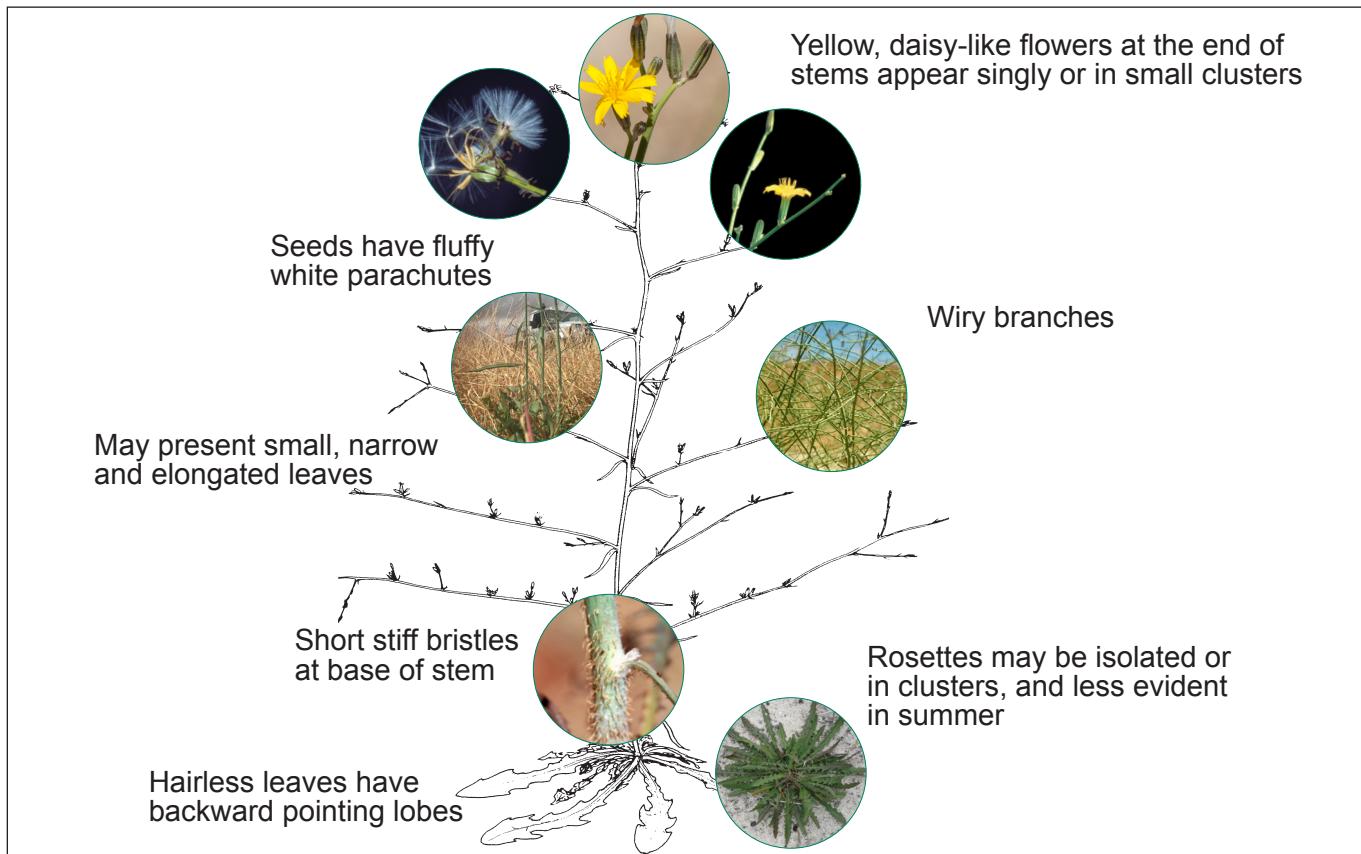
# Skeleton weed in Western Australia

Skeleton weed (*Chondrilla juncea*) is a declared pest under section 22(2) of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*. It can reduce grain crop yields by competing for moisture and nutrients, mainly nitrogen. A comprehensive management program supports participant growers through a voluntary funding scheme.

## Declaration categories

All landholders need to prevent the movement of seed and/or root fragments from their properties in produce (grain, seed and hay), wool, machinery and vehicles.

Declaration categories	Aims for the category
<b>C2 – eradication</b> whole of WA except Narembeen and Yilgarn shires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• eradicate infestations; destroy plants and prevent propagation each year until no plants remain</li><li>• prevent the spread of seed or plant parts</li><li>• summer search is required</li><li>• winter control is required.</li></ul>
<b>C3 – management</b> Narembeen and Yilgarn shires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• manage infestations to prevent the spread of seed or plant parts</li><li>• summer search is required</li><li>• treat plants to prevent seed set</li><li>• winter control is required to receive search assistance.</li></ul>



### Salient features of skeleton weed plants

## Description

Skeleton weed (*Chondrilla juncea* L.) is a perennial plant that develops from a rosette into a sparsely-leaved, erect plant of up to one metre tall. Erect, branched stems, with little or no foliage, are produced in early October.

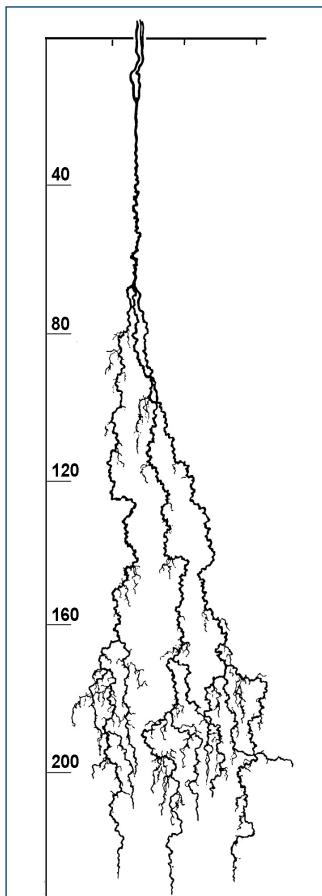
The rosette has hairless, deeply-lobed leaves with the lobes always pointing backwards, similar to the rosette formed by the English dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*).

Mature plants have an extensive root system. The tap root can be over 3 m long and the lateral roots can radiate up to 50 cm from the main taproot.

The stems are upright and hairless apart from some stiff bristles right at the base. The stems are leafless or have only small leaves, giving the appearance of the skeleton of a plant. The roots, stems and leaves exude a white latex when cut.



Skeleton weed rosette and tap root



Chondrilla juncea root system (source: Pagès et al. 2004)

Skeleton weed has yellow daisy-like flowers when plants are mature and flowering about 20 mm across and usually flowers from early December. Mature plants can continue to flower through to May with summer rain. The seeds are about 3 to 4 mm long with a parachute to aid wind dispersal.

A healthy, mature plant produces 10,000 to 20,000 seeds, which catch on wool, hair or fur.

Skeleton weed rosette leaves can vary in size and shape. There are currently 3 known Australian skeleton weed biotypes, referred to as narrow-leaf, intermediate and broadleaf. Research indicates that different biotypes may show varying responses to herbicides.

### How it spreads

Lateral root fragments as small as 5-10 mm can generate new plants. These fragments are usually dragged by farm machinery during cultivation. As seeds rarely survive more than 12 months under field conditions, there is no long-term seed bank. Seeds are fragile and susceptible to mould and bacteria, and predation by insects and birds.

### Where to find it

Skeleton weed is most likely to be found in pasture and grain paddocks at harvest time. It is also found on roadsides, railway lines and other disturbed land areas. It is also occasionally found in bushland.

Skeleton weed has been found in the South-West Land Division, on farms in a number of wheatbelt shires, in the Perth metropolitan area, and further south as far as Albany and Esperance.

### The Skeleton Weed Program

The Skeleton Weed Program is a coordinated approach to managing skeleton weed in Western Australia. The program is funded by the Grain, Seeds and Hay Industry Funding Scheme and delivered by the department.

Services provided by the program are available to landholders who contribute to the Grain, Seeds and Hay Industry Funding Scheme through the sale of grain, seed or hay. The funding scheme is voluntary and growers can choose to "optout" (making them non



Leaves on a skeleton weed rosette can vary in size and shape

contributors). However, if they have skeleton weed they are still required to meet their obligations under the program, at their cost.

The program's strategies include:

- Improving landholders' ability to find, report and eradicate skeleton weed.
- Advising on management techniques.
- Encouraging local grower groups, known as Local Action Groups, to participate in cooperative surveillance, reporting, management and eradication from their local areas.
- Incentives including search assistance and winter treatments (where landholders are compliant with program requirements).

## Report skeleton weed finds

To report skeleton weed in your local area, take photos and make contact via one of the methods below, based on your region.

Area	Reporting options
<b>Wheatbelt and rural WA</b>	Contact your nearest department office or Biosecurity Officer, or Local Action Group office. See website for details.
<b>Metropolitan</b>	Submit a report via the MyPestGuide™ Reporter app or go to the website to use the online tool. Select the 'MyWeedWatcher' option.  Contact the Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS) on 9368 3080 or <a href="mailto:padis@dpird.wa.gov.au">padis@dpird.wa.gov.au</a>

The Grains, Seeds and Hay Industry Funding Scheme, funded by WA grain grower contributions, raises funds to address priority biosecurity threats specific to the WA grains, seeds and hay industries.

### Important disclaimer

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**Skeleton weed is most recognisable when flowering in summer and autumn**



**Flowers, bud and seeds forming on stalks**

### Further information

Find out more about skeleton weed and the Skeleton Weed Program. Go to: [dpird.wa.gov.au/skeletonweed](http://dpird.wa.gov.au/skeletonweed) or scan the QR code below.

