

Californian poppy

Eschscholzia californica

Family

Papaveraceae (poppy)

Where is it originally from?

Western USA

What does it look like?

Annual or perennial herb growing as a small tufted rosette, or an erect branched plant (30-60 cm) with ribbed stems and grey or blue-green, much divided leaves (<10 cm x 10 cm). Produces individual yellow to orange flowers (spring and summer) with four overlapping petals (2-6 cm long) that only open in sunlight and that are followed by ribbed seed capsules (3-9 cm) that split in two to release numerous small black or dark brown seeds.

Are there any similar species?

E. californica can be distinguished from other poppies by its leaves which are divided into linear segments, its watery sap, and its seed capsule that splits into two parts.

Why is it weedy?

Tolerates hot, dry conditions and thrives in poor soils.

How does it spread?

Seed is spread when the capsule splits.

What damage does it do?

Outcompetes small native grasses and herbs on poor soils.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Bare, sandy or gravelly, dry or well-drained soils with high light levels, such as degraded or disturbed tussock grassland, braided rivers, dunes, coastal cliffs, degraded pasture, roadsides, scree slopes, and subalpine herbfields.

What can I do to get rid of it?

Physically remove the plant by hand pulling or digging (spring-summer).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Where appropriate plant local native plants to shade out seedlings.



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Photo: Trevor James



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