

*PENTZIA (ONCOSIPHON) SPP. IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA:
HISTORY, DISTRIBUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE*

J. Dodd

Department of Agriculture, Baron-Hay Court
South Perth W.A. 6151

Abstract. Two species of the South African genus *Pentzia* (*Oncosiphon*) [Family Asteraceae] occur as weeds in the south-west of Western Australia. Both are annuals. Globe chamomile, *P. globifera* (= *O. piluliferum* (1)), is naturalised only in Western Australia and is found in two separate parts of the wheatbelt, whereas Calomba daisy or tansy ragwort, *P. suffruticosa* (= *O. suffruticosum* (1)), is widespread in pastoral country around Kalgoorlie and also occurs at a few minor infestations in the eastern wheatbelt. The latter species is a weed of pastures, crops and roadsides in South Australia (3). In Western Australia, the earlier generic name, *matricaria*, is often used as the vernacular name for both species.

Globe chamomile was first collected in 1939 from a farm 170 km N of Perth (annual rainfall 460 mm). The population is still extant but has spread little in the 50 years since it was first reported. It is currently known from only six farms. The major part of this weed's distribution is in the central wheatbelt (rainfall = 320-350 mm) approximately 250 km ENE of Perth. The first specimen from that area was collected in 1969. Globe chamomile spread rapidly during the 1970 s and had occupied 14,200 ha by 1979 (Agriculture Protection Board of Western Australia, unpublished records). Calomba daisy was first collected in 1952 from Hamelin Bay, a small timber port in the extreme SW of the State (rainfall 1,200 mm), which was active late last century but is now defunct. It is likely that Calomba daisy was growing there long before it was first recorded and that it was introduced via ballast dumped by ships from South Africa, together with seeds of a number of other South African weeds including African thistle, *Berkheya rigida* (2). Calomba daisy has not been seen at Hamelin Bay in recent years and appears to have become extinct, due possibly to the absence of disturbance and the regeneration of native vegetation. Since its first collection near Kalgoorlie (rainfall 230 mm) in 1954, Calomba daisy has become widespread and is now scattered over 4,000,000 ha (3). In the eastern wheatbelt, where it was first collected in 1973, it has a very limited distribution and is currently known from only three locations near Merredin.

The main significance of globe chamomile is as a weed of pastures, especially stubble paddocks the year after cropping. It is highly aromatic and is generally avoided by sheep, apart from minor grazing in the early stages of plant development. Although it flourishes in cereals, it is readily controlled in crop by herbicides such as chlorsulfuron. Globe chamomile is also found in firebreaks and headlands, along fencelines and roadsides, in disturbed remnant vegetation, around farm buildings, in stock yards and at stock watering points (Dodd, unpublished). This plant is causing concern because of its recent rapid spread, unpalatability and the lack of selective control in pastures. In Western Australia, Calomba daisy is mainly a rangeland weed although it has been found in pastures and wheat and lupin crops in the eastern wheatbelt.

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