



Sclerolaena

A Guide to Identifying a Prickly Native

They may be a nuisance, and you most certainly don't want them anywhere you may be walking barefoot, but Sclerolaena (copperburrs, prickly bushes, bindyi) are a favourite of birds in Central Australia, and a guarantee that you'll have a variety of bird species feasting on them in your garden. Belonging to the family Chenopodiaceae, all 80 species of Sclerolaena are endemic to Australia.

Pictured below are 7 of the many species of Sclerolaena that are common in the Alice Springs region, so you can identify what the birds in your backyard are eating, or what's embedded in the bottom of your foot.

Grey Copperburr

Sclerolaena diacantha

diacantha: with two thorns or prickles

Perennial up to 30cm high with densely hairy stems. Linear, succulent leaves 10-15mm long. Fruit has 2 spines.

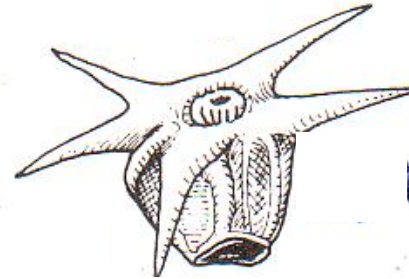
Occurs on a wide variety of soil types, but most commonly on sand plains. Often recognised as the most palatable of the Sclerolaena species.



Ribbed Bindyi

Sclerolaena costata

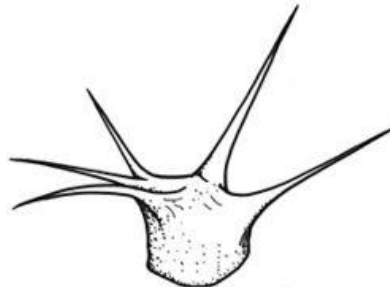
Perennial up to 60 cm high with fleshy, linear leaves 4-10mm long. Fruit has 4 spines. Occurs in slightly saline habitats including mulga scrub and the base of rocky hills.



Johnson's Copperburr

Sclerolaena johnsonii

Perennial to 40 cm high; branches glabrous (bare) to slightly hairy. Fruit has 5 long spines. Succulent leaves up to 10cm long.

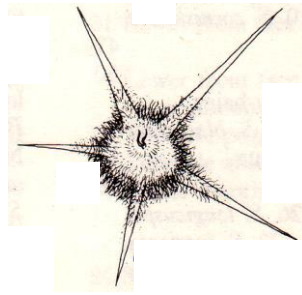


Cartwheel Burr

Sclerolaena cornishiana

cornishiana: named after William Cornish, 19th century SA Government surveyor.

Small, branched woolly annual or perennial forb, 30-60cm height. Soft small dense shrub with whitish hairs. Fruit has 5-6 spines. Occurs in small colonies in stony or rocky saline, sandy or clayey soils.



Goatshead Burr

Sclerolaena bicornis

bicornis: 2 horned, referring to the fruit

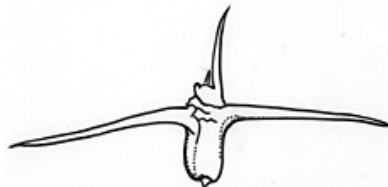
Branching shrub to 60cm high; covering of white woolly hairs. Fruit is white and woolly with 2 spines. Grows in red and black clayey soils, often in disturbed areas. It is an indicator of poor soil condition.



Succulent Copperburr

Sclerolaena cuneata

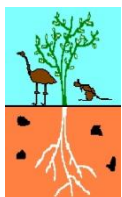
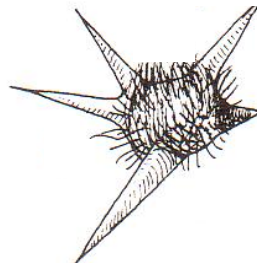
Dense, prickly, short-lived perennial forb up to 30cm high; fleshy leaves. Fruit has 3 (sometimes 4) strong spines. Grows in red clay, loam, sandy and shallow soils on plains, hills and stony ridges. Recognised as an increaser species and an indicator of overgrazing or over-utilisation.



Tall Copperburr

Sclerolaena convexula

A perennial forb up to 40cm high, with a covering of silky hairs. Fruit has 5 short spines. Small, pointy leaves 0.5-1cm long. Found in sandy and loamy red soils, and the shallow soils of hillsides.



Land for Wildlife & Garden for Wildlife
Central Australia

Hosted by Low Ecological Services P/L
ABN 55 064 311 502
PO Box 3130, Alice Springs, NT 0871, Australia
Phone: (08) 89 555 222 Fax: (08) 89 555 722
Email: lfw@lowecol.com.au
Web: www.wildlife.lowecol.com.au



Proudly sponsored by
Northern Territory
Government